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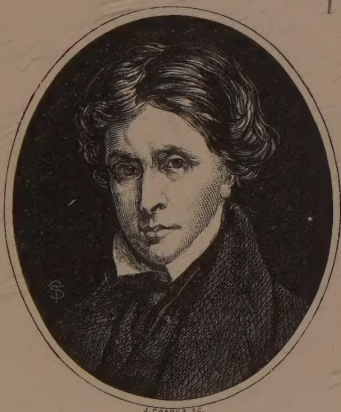
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THE BOOK
OF
THE SONNET

EDITED BY
LEIGH HUNT and S. ADAMS LEE

VOL. I.

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BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS
1878



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UNIVERSITY PRESS : WELCH, BIGELOW, & Co.,
CAMBRIDGE.



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CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER xi

AN ESSAY

ON THE CULTIVATION, HISTORY, AND VARIETIES OF THE SPECIES
OF POEM CALLED THE SONNET.

I. ON THE DESIRABLENESS OF CULTIVATING THE SONNET 3

II. OF THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE SONNET,
PARTICULARLY THE SONNET CALLED LEGITIMATE . 8

III. OF GUITTONE D'AREZZO, AND OF THE SONNETS OF
DANTE AND PETRARCA 16

IV. OF THE OTHER PRINCIPAL SONNET-WRITERS OF ITALY 28

V. OF OTHER LEGITIMATE BUT OBSOLETE FORMS OF THE
SONNET, PARTICULARLY THE COMIC SONNET . . 52

VI. OF ENGLISH SONNETS, AND OF THE SONNET ILLEGITIMATE,
OR QUATORZEN. 65

AMERICAN SONNETS AND SONNETEERS . . 93

ENGLISH SONNETS.

SIR THOMAS WYATT 135

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY 137

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY	142
SIR WALTER RALEIGH	148
EDMUND SPENSER	150
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	154
BEN JONSON	165
WILLIAM DRUMMOND, OF HAWTHORNDEN	166
JOHN MILTON	173
THOMAS GRAY	181
THOMAS WARTON	182
SAMUEL JACKSON PRATT	186
CHARLOTTE SMITH	187
ANNA SEWARD	193
HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS	197
MRS. MARY DARBY ROBINSON	198
SIR SAMUEL EGERTON BRYDGES	199
WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES	200
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE	206
CHARLES LAMB	219
CHARLES LLOYD	223
BERNARD BARTON	224
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH	226
ROBERT SOUTHEY	243
EDWARD, LORD THURLOW	247
PROFESSOR JOHN WILSON	249
CHARLES MACKAY	253
WILLIAM SOTHEY	255
HENRY KIRKE WHITE	256

JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE	258
LORD BYRON	259
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY	261
JOHN KEATS	265
JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT	275
VINCENT LEIGH HUNT	281
LAMAN BLANCHARD	282
HARTLEY COLERIDGE	284
MRS. FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS	290
THOMAS HOOD	295
BRYAN WALLER PROCTER	301
WILLIAM HENRY WHITWORTH	305
THOMAS DOUBLEDAY	307
WILLIAM GREEN	309
CHARLES STRONG	312
RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH	316
SIR JOHN HANMER	319
HENRY ALFORD	327
ARTHUR BROOKE	328
EDMUND PEEL	329
SIR AUBREY DE VERE	332
DAVID LESTER RICHARDSON	337







INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

TO SAMUEL ADAMS LEE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

(For though you are still young, and I am now indeed old, having outlived the period usually assigned to the age of man, yet, to say nothing of graver reasons, friendship, you know, may exist in its most companionable form between juniors and their elders, when founded on the love of such never-fading things as the beauties of nature and the books which they have inspired,) you gratified me extremely, when you asked for some remarks from my pen on the subject of the class of poems from which you meditated a selection. The interest which with a zeal so generous you take in the Transatlantic welfare of my writings would alone be as sufficient as it ought to be to set me gladly to the task ; but you considered, I have no doubt, (for I have learnt to detect your artifices in such matters,) that the subject would be one that I should like for its own sake also ; and when you concluded your request with mentioning the names

of the distinguished persons who agree with you in thinking that the remarks would be welcome to the American public, the measure of my satisfaction was "full measure, pressed down, and running over."

It may be thought by some persons who do not happen to be conversant with the particular form of verse denominated the SONNET, that, while making extracts from poets, we might have done better than confine ourselves to a species of composition not yet associated in the general mind with the idea of anything very marked or characteristic ; but it will not be difficult to show, that the Sonnet, while admitting of a greater and happier levity than those who think lightest of it imagine, is in reality connected with some of the most thoughtful, some of the most affecting, and some of the grandest events of the most exalted men.

"Scorn not the Sonnet," says one of its most dignified masters :—

"Scorn not the Sonnet. Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honors. With this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart ; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound ;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound ;
With it Camoens soothed an exile's grief ;
The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle-leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow ; a glow-worm lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Fairy-land
To struggle through dark ways ; and when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand

The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
Soul-animating strains, — alas ! too few."

The regret expressed by Wordsworth, in the conclusion of his sonnet, will, I hope, serve as a warning against similar shortcomings to the Bryants, Longfells, and Lowells among you, and all others whom it may concern, but with whose names and genius I am not equally well acquainted. Next indeed in enjoyment to the gratification which I experience for my own sake as well as for that of your friendly zeal, in complying with your wish in regard to the present volume, is the indulgence of a hope, that, as previous writers on the class of poetry which it illustrates have not exhausted the subject, and as the selection of the many beautiful specimens which it contains proceeds upon a plan combining personal with poetical interest, it may help to excite a disposition to the cultivation of the Sonnet in all poetical quarters, particularly those of the country in which the book makes its first appearance. Reasons for the pleasure and other advantages to be expected from so doing will be found, I trust, in the Essay which follows this letter. I cannot help looking upon myself, in this matter, as a kind of horticulturist who has brought a stock of flowers with him from Italy and England, for the purpose of diffusing their seeds and off-sets, wherever the soil can be found congenial ; and therefore, with your leave, and with the privilege of free-speaking which

is conceded to guests and graybeards, I hereby give notice, that if in the course of a few years from the date of this intimation a good crop of Sonnets, of all hues and varieties, does not start up throughout the said quarters, like a new flush of beauty to your meadows, or song to your groves, (for birds and flowers grow ripe together,) I shall be inclined to ask my American cousins what right they possess not only to the wit and the poetry that already flourish among them, but to the more than Italian sun that warms so much of their territory, and to that extraordinary feathered songster, the Mocking-Bird, which is the only imitator in the world that beats what it imitates.

Be this however as it may, and let our Selections prosper in any respect or not, I am ever,

Dear Mr. Lee,

Your obliged and affectionate friend,

LEIGH HUNT.



AN ESSAY
ON THE
CULTIVATION, HISTORY, AND VARIETIES
OF THE SPECIES OF POEM CALLED
THE SONNET.







ESSAY.

I.

ON THE DESIRABLENESS OF CULTIVATING THE SONNET.

THE object of this Essay is twofold, — first, to assist in furthering the cultivation and enjoyment of a species of verse peculiarly fitted to diffuse an acquaintance with poetical composition; and, second, to perform the like office in diffusing an acquaintance with Italian as well as English poetry.

By “cultivation” is meant the practice of Sonnet-writing by such as are inclined to poetize in that direction; by the “enjoyment” of the Sonnet, the pleasure already taken, or to be taken in it, by lovers of poetry in general, whether writers or readers.

As to “Italian and English poetry,” the words carry with them their own recommendation to all who know anything of poetry or music; yet I always feel so grateful to the very sound of the Italian language, when about to put its words on paper, that by way of prelude to my task I cannot but quote what has been said of it by

a late gallant and conscientious writer, Captain Henry Napier, who, in the sixth volume of his "Florentine History," no less truly than gracefully describes it as "a language replete with beauty, abounding in energy, adapted alike to the deepest pathos and the loftiest flights of poetry, — as well to the breathings of youthful love, as to the resistless energy of passion, or the liveliest sallies of wit, — descending from the sublime to the burlesque, from the palace to the cottage, with the grace and facility of a bird, and charming in every flight."

There would be more poets in a nation, more pleasure in the general reading of poetry, and no fear of the incompatibility of such pleasures with the duties of active life, if people in all parts of the world were as aware as they have long been in the South of Europe what an amount of good poetry and of wholesome recreation can be put into the small compass of this favorite of the Italian language, the Sonnet. They would be glad to find how much enjoyment can be got out of the mere perusal of it by a little more knowledge of its requirements; what a pastime worthy of their genius the study and construction of it have been to some of the greatest men; and how little, with anybody, a like diversity of his leisure need interfere with the ordinary business of life, any more than the meal, or the walk, or any other of those every-day recreations which are necessary to the right and wholesome despatch of business itself.

The sonnet-writers of Italy are innumerable. Not only all their celebrated poets are among them, — perhaps it may be said, every poet without exception, — but men of all ranks, callings, and professions, — soldiers, statesmen, mechanics, princes, lawyers, merchants, paint-

ers, physicians, men of science, monks, cardinals, composers, &c., not excepting a multitude of ladies. Indeed, it was not to be expected that ladies would be left out where so much love is concerned, to say nothing of the domestic affections in general, which have produced some of the most beautiful of all sonnets. And if the present condition of Italy be thought a counter-evidence to the good of its example, let us recollect all which Italy did of old, united or disunited, and all which its enemies fear it would do, if united again. Napoleon is said to have been of opinion that it would again govern the world. Countrymen of Alfred and of Washington may be allowed to differ with that opinion; not to mention the generals they produced in the times of Anne and George the Fourth. But Napoleon — himself an Italian — was not hindered by the sonnets of Italy from coming to that conclusion; nor did the sonnet-writers themselves fail to do their best towards rousing the energies of their *provers* with constant remonstrances and reproaches. Most of the poets of Italy, some of the greatest in particular, have been men active out in the world, — sometimes, it has been thought, too active, — a charge which Tories in England have brought against Milton, and Whigs against Spenser, — both of them, like Dante, writers of sonnets as well as of poems on a scale the most grand.

There is a combination of advantages peculiar to the sonnet, which, when acquaintance is once made with it, naturally tend to make it a favorite with everybody. These are, first, that, with the exception of one class of subjects, — the dithyrambical, which disdains all order and bounds, — there is none which is unsuitable to it, —

whether light or serious, the humblest or the most exalted. Second, that, being short, it occupies so much the less time either in reading or composing. Third, that its brevity adds to its force, and so makes it the easier to remember. Fourth, that, being restricted to certain limits, a sonnet complete in other respects, is of necessity complete in all, and thus gratifies the workman with a consciousness of his having done something finished, however little ; and, fifth and last, that a single sonnet, in consequence, may procure the writer a repute and even a duration — as will be seen in the course of this volume — which circumstances beyond his control might otherwise have put out of the question.

Every mood of mind can be indulged in a sonnet ; every kind of reader appealed to. You can make love in a sonnet, you can laugh in a sonnet, you can lament in it, can narrate or describe, can rebuke, can admire, can pray. One of the most affecting sonnets of Petrarca is a prayer to God for pardon of his lost time. Dante, when he was young, and before strife had embittered his feelings, left, in a sonnet, a model for the expression of love. In sonnets Petrarca and Alfieri denounced the vices of the Papal court. In sonnets the “great Filicaia” — as Wordsworth called him — mourned the beauty that attracted invaders to Italy, and the sloth and effeminacy that would not repel them. In sonnets Berni satirized, and Casti harmlessly jested, and English poets wrote as we have seen Wordsworth describe them, and Wordsworth himself has obtained by no means the least part of his fame. Indeed, all the sonnets to which allusion has thus been made are famous in their own countries, if not throughout the world, — some of them known wherever a language of Europe is spoken.

Our essay, then, may enter into some details on the subject, not only without the fear of being thought frivolous, but with the confidence derivable from these great names, and with the enjoyment which such companionship naturally tends to produce.





II.

OF THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE SONNET, PARTICULARLY THE SONNET CALLED LEGITIMATE.

THE little species of poem called a sonnet, which is limited in general to fourteen lines, and is rhymed and arranged according to particular laws, made its first known appearance at the beginning of the twelfth century, and in Italy. Like almost all the forms of Italian poetry, it is supposed to have originated in Provence ; and it derived its name, like the composition called a *Sonata*, from being *sounded* or played ; that is to say, accompanied by a musical instrument. To *sound*, in Italian, still means to play music ; and the sonnet, of old, was never without such accompaniment. The *Canzone*, or *Ode*, like the *Canzonetta*, or *Song*, — the *Chanson* and *Chansonette* of the French, — might be chanted, or sung, with the voice only ; and so might the *Canto*, or division, of the narrative poem ; as was the case with the stanzas of Tasso, that were sung up to a late period by the Venetian gondolier. The *Ballata*, or ballad, — from *ballare*, to dance, whence our word Ball, — a species of song, the name of which has strangely wandered from its first meaning, might be danced to, also with the voice only.

The *Madrigal*, sometimes called *Madriale*, or *Mandriale*, a small, irregular set of verses, often of the briefest and humblest description, and so named, according to the received opinion, from *Mandra*, or *Mandria*, a sheepfold, but more probably, I conceive, from the song of the *mother* (*madre*), or nursery song, implied nothing directly musical either way ; though it subsequently came to mean a particular species of vocal composition in parts. But the sonnet, agreeably to its appellation, was never heard without the sounding of the lute or the guitar. This connection, as we shall see, lasted a long time ; and when it ceased, it left upon the little poem a demand for treatment more than commonly musical, and implying, so to speak, the companion which it had lost.

When I first began this Essay, I had entered more at large into these and other matters relative to the name and rise of the sonnet ; such as a late etymology from the French word *Sonnette*, a sheep-bell ; the strange, pedantic question, whether the species of poem originated in the Pindaric Ode, or in the Greek or Latin Epigram, things either too long or too short, and quite out of the beat of its early writers ; the demand of a certain logical mode of treatment, which it was long the fashion to consider indispensably necessary ; and, lastly, certain recondite musical analogies, which a late enthusiast on the subject, Mr. Capel Lofft, found between its fourteen lines and the gamut.

Two of these points, however, are scarcely worth the mention here given them ; and the other two, which contain germs of truth, may be briefly despatched.

The fourteen lines of the Sonnet Proper, or what is called the Legitimate Sonnet, that is to say, the one

written according to the laws which have prevailed in Italy ever since the time of Petrarca, are divided into two distinct portions, Major and Minor, each of which is subdivided into two also. The Major division consists of eight lines, called the *Octave*, which possesses but two rhymes ; the Minor, of six lines, called the *Sestet*, which possesses never more than three ; and the subdivisions or halves of these eight lines are called *Quatrains*, and those of the six lines *Terzettes*. The two rhymes of the Major division almost invariably occupy the same places ; the two or three rhymes of the Minor may be varied at pleasure, but seldom close with a couplet.

A few glances, however, at the sonnets themselves will be worth a hundred directions of this kind ; only the student is to bear in mind, that the music of the lines is to be at once as sweet and as strong and as varied as possible, and that there should be something of a difference of tone discernible in the Major and Minor portions, as there is in the divisions of music so called, or in the two strains of an air or melody.

The logical notion of the treatment of this construction of verse arose in the times when Aristotle and the schoolmen were all in all with men of letters ; and it was probably not unassisted by the musical instinct which perceives questions, and replies, and solutions, in tones and cadences. The musical notion, as pushed to its excess by Mr. Lofft,* would appear to have been suggested to him by his confusion of Friar Guittone of Arezzo, who is understood to have first given the sonnet its right modulation, with another Friar of the same

* In his collection of sonnets entitled "Laura," Vol. I., Preface, p. v.

name and place, who flourished a long time before him, and who was supposed to be the inventor of counter-point.

The logical notion prevailed so long with critics of a certain scholarly and conventional turn of mind, that, so late as towards the middle of the last century, Quadrio, one of the most distinguished of them, tells us, that the business of the first quatrain of the sonnet is to state the proposition of it; of the second quatrain to prove the proposition; of the first *terzette* to confirm it, and of the second *terzette* to draw the conclusion;* and the good Father Ceva, in his selection of pieces of this kind for the use of schools, likens the sonnet to a syllogism, in which, if the conclusion is not strictly drawn from the premises, the whole is a mere play of words and of rhymes.†

That such a system could never prevail over the manifest temptations to be more free and easy, need hardly be observed. The sonnet was too obvious a resource for expressing any emotion whatsoever, to be restricted to formalities so pedantic; and accordingly it finally obeyed no laws in general but those that are essential to all good poetry, with the exception of such as were necessary to render it what it was, and to secure for it that completeness, and that freedom from blemish, which alone can render a small thing precious.

On the other hand, it would be rash to affirm that logic had no involuntary concern, or music no artistical concern, in forming the sonnet. There is an instinct of music in every kind of verse; and there is, or ought to

* *Della Storia e della Ragione d' Ogni Poesia*, (Milano, 1742,) Tom. III. p. 16.

† *Scelta di Sonetti*, (Torino, 1735,) p. 42.

be, a beginning, a middle, and an end in every kind of composition. Reason must naturally reason, and emotion speak, as well and consistently as it can ; and music is only emotion singing. The poets who flourished while the sonnet was maturing were all, more or less, musicians as well as poets ; the minstrels, their predecessors, had invariably, in the first instance, written both the words and the music of their compositions, though the tasks gradually became divided ; but every poet played on the lute or guitar ; every poet accompanied his chant or his recitation with it ; and the more musical the poet, the more he would feel the musical capabilities of what he composed. One improvement in this respect would produce another ; verses, like musical bars, would be found to have their claims on variety of accent and pause ; and final satisfaction of the ear might, naturally enough, suggest the settlement of a determinate amount of size in the sum total. Theories on such points may be pushed to extremes by enthusiasts, and niceties of intention be attributed where they did not exist ; but as verse itself is often written without a knowledge of prosody, and music itself composed with little insight into the subtleties of its grammar, so feeling alone might have suggested those analogies of majors and minors, of tones, modulations, cadences, and harmonical progressions, the reality of which in sonnets of masterly execution will be admitted, more or less, by every good ear which is not unacquainted with the terms of the musical art.

A sonnet is, in fact, or ought to be, a piece of music as well as of poetry ; and as every lover of music is sensible of the division even of the smallest air into two

parts, the second of which is the consequent or necessary demand of the first ; and as these parts consist of phrases and cadences, which have similar sequences and demands of their own, so the composition called a sonnet, being a long air or melody, becomes naturally divided into two different strains, each of which is subdivided in like manner ; and as quatrains constitute the one strain, and terzettes the other, we are to suppose this kind of musical demand the reason why the limitation to fourteen lines became, not a rule without a reason, but an harmonious necessity.

Readers, however, who may wish to write sonnets at once, notwithstanding they may have had little acquaintance with the art, are not bound to think of all which is here said, or of any portion of it, till the interest they take in their work incite them to do so. Ear and other qualifications may suffice them to begin, — may suffice them always, if excellent ; though, in that case, the more they can do, the more they will wish to know what can be done. The greatest poets, as we shall see presently, even in regard to a sonnet, have ever been the greatest students of their art. I do not say that lesser poets, far lesser, cannot study it too. All I say is, that the greatest poets invariably study it ; and with results of course in proportion.

The majority of the persons who look into this book will be no “ scorers ” of sonnets ; perhaps none of them will ; but should such a person be among them, the following summary of the conditions requisite to a perfect sonnet may show him what he has undertaken to scorn. For a sonnet, like everything else, is to be judged according to what properly and thoroughly constitutes it, and

not from specimens that fall short of its requirements. The student need not be alarmed by the summary. Perfection, as a *sine qua non*, is to be demanded of nobody ; and many a sonnet has lasted and been found beautiful, that had no pretensions to it. Still perfection is to be aimed at : it has often, in this small shape, been realized ; points of it may be attained, if not all ; some points must be always attempted, such as unforced rhymes, and unsuperfluous words ; and the student will do well always to bear in mind what has been said by a critic not given to the sentimental, — that “one sonnet without a fault is alone worth a long poem.” *

The sonnet, then, in order to be a perfect work of art, and no compromise with a difficulty, must in the first place be a Legitimate Sonnet after the proper Italian fashion ; that is to say, with but two rhymes to the octave, and not more than three in the sestet.

Secondly, it must confine itself to one leading idea, thought, or feeling.

Thirdly, it must treat this one leading idea, thought, or feeling in such a manner as to leave in the reader's mind no sense of irrelevancy or insufficiency.

Fourthly, it must not have a speck of obscurity.

Fifthly, it must not have a forced rhyme.

Sixthly, it must not have a superfluous word.

Seventhly, it must not have a word too little ; that is to say, an omission of a word or words, for the sake of convenience.

Eighthly, it must not have a word out of its place.

Ninthly, it must have no very long word, or any

* “Un sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poëme.”

BOILEAU.

other that tends to lessen the number of accents, and so weaken the verse.

Tenthly, its rhymes must be properly varied and contrasted, and not beat upon the same vowel, — a fault too common with very good sonnets. It must not say, for instance, *rhyme, tide, abide, crime*; or *play, gain, refrain, way*; but contrast *i* with *o*, or with some other strongly opposed vowel, and treat every vowel on the same principle.

Eleventhly, its music, throughout, must be as varied as it is suitable; more or less strong, or sweet, according to the subject; but never weak or monotonous, unless monotony itself be the effect intended.

Twelfthly, it must increase, or, at all events, not decline, in interest, to its close.

Lastly, the close must be equally impressive and unaffected; not epigrammatic, unless where the subject warrants it, or where point of that kind is desirable; but simple, conclusive, and satisfactory; strength being paramount, where such elevation is natural, otherwise on a level with the serenity; flowing in calmness, or grand in the manifestation of power withheld.

Go now, you who undertook to scorn the sonnet, and see if you had not better have made made yourself a little more acquainted with what you scorned.





III.

OF GUITTONE D'AREZZO, AND OF THE SONNETS OF DANTE AND PETRARCA.



ENTION has been made, in the preceding section, of a certain Friar Guittone of Arezzo, who is believed to have been the first to give the sonnet its right workmanlike treatment and versification. Mr. Lofft, in the third volume of his "Laura" (Sonnet 158), has selected a most extraordinary effusion of the Reverend Brother, for the purpose of appending to it the gamut supposed to have been invented by the Friar, his namesake, and of showing the musical accord of the verses therewith. The sonnet has a tremendous accompaniment of its own; no less, namely, than the trumpet of the Day of Judgment, which the good Brother says he shall be "delighted to hear," together with the awful words that ensue, because the Creator will then see, by his countenance, how he, Friar Guittone, has always loved Him! Not a word is added of pity for those who had not been so pious. Such is not the occasion which other lovers of the Divine Being — St. Francis de Sales, for instance, or Bishop Berkeley, or Dr. Doddridge — would have selected for manifesting this kind of superiority over their fellow-creatures. And

yet this same Friar — so great is the difference between what a man actually feels and what he thinks he could feel — has left a veritably tender as well as elegant sonnet on the subject of human love, which accords with the opinion entertained of him as the harbinger of good sonneting.

Guittone d' Arezzo was followed by the tender Cino da Pistoia, by the noble-minded Guido Cavalcante, and by their great friend Dante Alighieri, who, with the graceful Guido Guinicelli and the others, carried to philosophical heights of refinement those efforts of the brain which the Provençal poets were in the habit of substituting for effusions of the heart ; but these transcendentalisms were accompanied with a sensibility and a pathos which not only exonerated the Italians from the charge of a like mistake, but confirmed those demands of real feeling in the sonnet, and in amatory poetry in general, which were soon to be diffused throughout the civilized world by the fame of Petrarca.

Nor is it to be denied, we think, that, as far as feeling and expression are concerned, to say nothing of imagination, the sonnet, in the hands of Dante, reached a perfection which Petrarca himself did not attain. Dante, when religious or political fanaticism did not lower him into one of the most melancholy spectacles on earth, — that of a great understanding overmastered by a violent will, — could be not only a profound thinker and observer, but tender and affectionate in the extremest degree. In imagination, which is the highest requisite of poetry, he surpassed perhaps every other poet in the world, before or since, — certainly was by none surpassed ; and if this, in so proud, presumptuous, and irascible a man, says lit-

tle for the exaltation of poetry itself in comparison with philosophy, — for who supposes Plato and Socrates to have been slaves to such infirmities? — it says nothing — anticlimax apart — against the all-embracing little sonnet, in which a man may show what humors he pleases, provided he show them in a poetical manner. Dante, accordingly, has cursed as well as blessed in his sonnets; while in the very earliest of them, written before he was out of his teens, he gave promise of that rare and intense imagination of which he was afterwards so profuse. Had he written indeed as many poems of this kind, or half as many, as his illustrious successor in this line, and thoroughly applied his faculties to the task, it is to be doubted whether he, instead of Petrarca, would not have set the pattern of the sonnet to succeeding ages, and elevated the nature of its demands besides.

For next to the unquestionable superiority in the highest respect of one of these renowned poets over the other, that of Dante in the Sonnet — as appears to me — was the very important one of grace over elegance; that is to say, of the inner spirit of the beautiful over the outer; of unstudied, as opposed to studied effect; of sentiment expressing itself wholly for its own sake, contrasted with sentiment selecting its words for the sake of the words also.

Not that Petrarca had no grace. Far was he from any such nullity. He had a great deal of grace, but not so much in distinction from the critical sense of it; not such reliance upon it, apart from the aid to be given it by the accomplishments of style. Petrarca has frequent instances, not only of grace, but of passion; to say

nothing of the most exalted mind. But he lived in an age of less trouble and more literature than Dante, was more prosperous and in favor, and was also of a nature less given to extremes; so that his poetry, like his life, was altogether of a more equable description; and hence a difference in it from Dante's, which, if it rendered it not so great, left it still greatly beautiful, and, till society itself became stirred up and impassioned with new revolutions, more popular.

Petrarca has been pronounced monotonous. His subject, no doubt, is monotonous; and it is easy to give a few glances at him and lay him aside under that impression. But how is it that the world has listened to him so long? Ladies, too, may be thought to know something of this matter; and they are all in his favor. Ladies of no great turn for monotony in love have expressly admired him for his variations on that theme; and sentimental ladies have found him as charming in the nineteenth century as he was in the fourteenth. Nor are the other sex, whose good-will he has not so bespoken, less fervid in their extolments. Throughout the whole series of Italian poets, not excepting his fault-finder Tassoni, his praises are constantly sounding; and two of the latest and manliest of them — Alfieri and Foscolo — worshipped the ground he trod on. A reign of five hundred years over the most poetical and musical of countries, with all Europe for its echo, is surely answer enough to a charge of monotony.*

It is to be acknowledged, however, that you must

* See Alfieri's Sonnets; Foscolo's Letters of Ortis; Madame de Genlis's Petrarch and Laura; and the Margravine of Anspach's Memoirs. We quote them all from memory.

listen closely, and that the more you know of his language, the more you will find it varied.

What Petrarca did for the sonnet, for its readers, and for his own special renown, as its exemplar, was, first, to free it from the crudities and metaphysics of preceding times, which the lyrical poetry of Dante himself had not thoroughly outgrown ; second, to give it a music superior to Dante's ; third, besides beauties of style and modulation obvious to all, to give it others, of which his countrymen only are thoroughly qualified to speak, and of which they always speak with delight ; and fourth, to render the sonnet so popular by its abundance, such a favorite with women by its life-long praises of one object, and so welcome to the best of their lovers for the dignity of the author's character and his exaltation of the passion, that it necessitated a like refinement in the love-making of his countrymen in general ; and thus did a good to Italy, which war, a ferocious libertinism, and the sensuousness natural to the South, might have withheld from it for ages. It was on these accounts, that Petrarca's lesser, though beautiful genius, being brought nearer to our common earth by the revolutions of time and feeling, eclipsed that of the mightier star, Dante, up to a period as late as the present century. And for reasons greater than all others, this last consequence in particular appears to me to have been fortunate, — I would dare to say providential, if I might presume to look into secrets so great ; for there was a baneful side of the star, the influence of which it was desirable to arrest, till it could be neutralized by less superstitious times.

As to the conceits which Petrarca is accused of mingling with his better thoughts, and so leaving them for

false lights to his successors, such as his antitheses of burning in ice and freezing in fire, his hyperbolical comparisons of his mistress with angels and stars and suns, and his punning identifications of her name with *Laurel* and with *the air*, — *L'Aura*, — the charge must be allowed to be true, as far as the indulgence in them became a habit, and so procured them an undue amount of attention; otherwise I would venture to suggest, that, however critically objectionable on these, or on any strictly poetical accounts, they are not so untrue to nature as lovers less enthusiastic suppose; nor would such a lover as Petrarca have been thoroughly true to his passion, had he altogether omitted them. All young, excessive, and idealizing love speaks or thinks occasionally, more or less, in the same manner. All the love of the South and of the East talked so, and had talked so, long before the time of Petrarca. Romeo and Juliet talked so; and so, in all probability, did Shakespeare himself, when he was a youth in his teens, to Anne Hathaway, and very much astonished the daughter of the "substantial yeoman." Young Dante talked so and *looked* so to Beatrice; and got laughed at for his pains. Even Ariosto, a sensuous lover in comparison with these, and famous for his being a natural writer, was not without such talk in his *Furioso*. So long as conceits are natural to passion, they will be vindicable under certain states of feeling in poetry; and Petrarca's love was so impassioned that, as in known instances of optical delusion, in certain ultra-sensitive conditions of the brain, there is reason to believe that he sometimes visibly beheld the image of his mistress before him; and this not only at night-time, but even in solitudes by day. How then are we to wonder

that he discerned shadows and intimations of her in the wavings of trees, in outlines of the very rocks, in sunlight and starlight, in the name of the Laurel that was to bind his brows, or in that of the air, — *L'Aura*, — which was his life and breath? He sometimes even feared what he had seen, and “shivered” in the midst of the wonder and fever of his thoughts. This was no “cold” passion; and the only just objection that can be made to such expressions is the one implied by that epithet; which in the instance, therefore, of Petrarca is unjust.

“If a thing is worth doing at all,” said Johnson, “it is worth doing well.” To show the respect which the great poet Dante had for the making of a sonnet, and the attention which this other of the four great poets of Italy thought proper to bestow on its association with music, I shall conclude the present section with one or two small but curious passages out of the “Early Life” — *Vita Nuova* — of the former, and a larger one, very curious, from the “Essays on Petrarch,” by Ugo Foscolo.

“This sonnet,” says Dante, speaking of the one beginning,

“Tutti li miei pensier parlan d’amore,”

“may be divided into three parts. In the first, I lay down the proposition that all my thoughts are of love. In the second, I say that they are discordant, and state this discrepancy. In the third, I mention that in which they all agree,” &c.

Of another sonnet, — the one beginning,

“Ciò che m’ incontra nella mente mora,” —

he says, in like manner : —

“This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first,

I state the reason why I forbear approaching my lady. In the second, I relate what befalls me when I approach her. This second part is subdivided into five different subjects," &c.

Dante notices also, in his treatise on the "Vernacular Tongue," — *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, — the minutest requirements of various forms of metrical composition. It is a great mistake to suppose, that, in proportion as a poet is inspired by nature, he cares nothing for the help of art. On the contrary, it may be asserted, that, the greater his inspiration, the greater is his respect for the means through which he is to convey it, — the greater his study of language, of metre, of words. Dante was as great a critic for his time as he was a poet for all time. Spenser wrote a treatise on poetry, which is unfortunately lost; and Milton could have given a critical and musical reason for every verse which he uttered. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose that Beethoven and Paesello were not as deep in the grammar of their art as professors who can do nothing but teach it; that Raphael could not have given a reason for every line which his knowledge of anatomy rendered true, or Titian for every color which he studied in cheek or landscape.

Now hear the great sonnet-minstrel, Petrarca, recording his experiments with his verses on his lute. But first hear how they are introduced to us by his poetical critic, Foscolo. Cultivators of the sonnet are not to be daunted by them. The lute and the sonnet are no longer married, — no longer even acquainted, — though, on occasion, it is to be hoped they may be. It would be pleasant to hear a good animated sonnet chanted, or

otherwise musically impressed on us, by fervid accompaniments of lute or guitar.

“Little,” says Foscolo, “as the *Sonetti* and *Canzoni* may appear to our modern composers of operas to be susceptible of music, it is not on that account the less true that these terms are derived from *Suono* and *Canto*, and that poets often added notes of music to their stanzas. In the manuscripts, which are still preserved at Florence, of Franco Sacchetti and other contemporaries of Petrarch,* the following note is to be found at the head of some of their sonnets: ‘*Intonatum per Francum:—Scriptor dedit sonum.*’ † The system of Italian music by counterpoint had been created three centuries before their age by Guido d’ Arezzo; and it is only in our days that it has been refined and complicated by the followers of the German school. Poetry was not then in Italy the mere *caput mortuum* of music; and the human voice, instead of being a subordinate accessory to the orchestra, filled the most prominent part, and was accompanied by inanimate instruments only so far as was necessary to support it, and to regulate its modifications. The words might then strike the ear with less astonishment than the tunes, but they spoke more forcibly to the heart, and more usefully to the mind. Petrarch poured forth his

* It may be thought strange to see an Italian writing the poet’s name in this old English way, and an Englishman writing it like an Italian; but Foscolo’s spelling was the polite concession of a guest to the country which he had made his home; and it is high time to follow the example of Roscoe and others in writing the word correctly. We no longer say *Boccace* instead of *Boccaccio*. Why should we deteriorate the name of his friend?

† “Sung or chanted by Franco; the writer gave the air.” Franco was not Sacchetti, but a celebrated singer of the time.

verses to the sound of his lute, which he bequeathed in his will to a friend ; and his voice was sweet, flexible, and of great compass. All the love-poetry of his predecessors, except that of Cino, wants sweetness of numbers ; but the sweetness of Petrarch is enlivened with a variety, a rapidity, and a glow, which no Italian lyric has ever possessed in an equal degree."

And again, in a passage which must have seemed very remarkable to such readers as had been in the habit of considering a sonnet a trifle, Foscolo gives us the following "literal translation of a succession of memorandums" at the head of one of the sonnets that were thus "intoned" :—

" 'I began this,' says Petrarch, 'by the impulse of the Lord — *Domino jubente*— 10th September, at the dawn of day, *after my morning prayers*.'

" 'I must make these two verses over again, singing them — *cantando* ;— and I must transpose them. 3 o'clock, A. M., 19th October.'

" 'I like this—*hoc placet*. 30th October, 10 o'clock in the morning.'

" 'No : this does not please me. 20th December, in the evening.'

"And in the midst of his corrections," continues Foscolo, "he writes, on laying down his pen, 'I shall return to this again ; I am called to supper.'

" 'February 18th. Towards noon. This is now well :— however, look at it again — *vide tamen adhuc*.'

"Sometimes he notes the town where he happens to be :— '1364, *Veneris Mane*, 19 Jan. *dum invitus Patavii ferior*.'* It might seem rather a curious than useful

* "Friday Morning. — While idling against my will in Padua."

remark, that it was generally on Friday that he occupied himself with the painful labor of correction, did we not also know that it was to him a day of fast and penitence.*

“When any thought occurred to him, he noted it in the midst of his verses, thus : —

“ ‘Consider this.—I had some thoughts of transposing these lines, and of making the first verse the last, but I have not done so for the sake of harmony. The first would then be more sonorous, and the last less so, which is against rule ; for the end should be more harmonious than the beginning.’

“Sometimes he says : ‘The commencement is good, but it is not pathetic enough.’ In some places he suggests to himself to repeat the same words rather than the same ideas. In others he judges it better not to multiply the ideas, but to amplify them with other expressions. Every verse is turned in several different ways ; above each phrase and each word he frequently places equivalent expressions, in order to examine them again ; and it requires a profound knowledge of Italian to perceive, that, after such perplexing scruples, he always adopts those words which combine at once most harmony, elegance, and energy.”†

Petrarca’s lyric poems, which are chiefly sonnets to the amount of more than three hundred, were written during the course of thirty-two years ; so that he had plenty of

* Did he call this “ idling ” ? or was he speaking only of his stay in Padua altogether ?

† Ugo Foscolo, *Essays on Petrarch*, (1823,) p. 90 and p. 57. Foscolo was wrong, in common with all the world, in attributing the invention of counterpoint to Guittone d’Arezzo ; as the reader may see in the *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens* by the most learned of musical critics, M. Fetis.

time before him, though he was otherwise an industrious writer and voluminous correspondent. But he would let a sonnet lie polishing at leisure in his mind for months together, like a pebble on the sea-shore.


Cannot others, no less busy, have their sonnet polishing too? The cigar will not hinder it; and the doctor will not quarrel with it, as he does sometimes with the cigar.





IV.

OF THE OTHER PRINCIPAL SONNET-WRITERS OF ITALY.

OR a considerable time after the death of Petrarca, few sonnets but his own appear to have been heard from the lutes of poets. Emulation of them was thought so hopeless, that imitation itself became daunted. Literary ambition, too, at that period was turned into new directions by the novels of Petrarca's friend Boccaccio, by the increasing discoveries of ancient classics, by the substitution of the Greek language itself for transferences of its authors through Arabic and Latin versions, and lastly, by the disturbed condition of Italy in Church and State, the rise of petty sovereignties, and the downfall of republics. It was not till near a century from the time of Petrarca's being in flower with his sonnets, that the first regular crop of imitations of them made its appearance in those of a Roman gentleman of the name of Giusto de' Conti, who collected them under the title of "The Beautiful Hand," — *La Bella Mano*.

I would fain have discovered some merit in this earliest and not least enthusiastic imitator of the great sonneteer; but I can only mention and dismiss him, as the type of all the poet's imitators; who, whatever

may have been their popularity for a time, owing to the absolute passion of Italy for this kind of writing, lost it, as sheer matter of superfluity, when they had nothing else to distinguish them from the crowds by whom they were emulated. Every one of these gentlemen sighed and died to such an excess for some Laura-like idol, who was at once the sweetest and cruellest of her sex, that you wonder they did not all burst out a-laughing some morning, by one common impulse, at the ridiculous figure they were making ; as indeed now and then the critics did for them. Fortunately, the ladies whom they addressed are understood, for the most part, to have laughed in self-defence ; for what were common mortals to say to adulations that took them out of the category of humanity, and rendered it ridiculous in them to eat their figs and macaroni ? The title of Giusto's book is not a mere title. The beautiful Hand which he worshipped forms the main subject of it ; and the reader may judge what a small source of inspiration a lover must own to, when he represents a hand, however beautiful, as the main cause of his passion. You seem never to see the lady's face, — though he mentions that also, — or to think it can be worth seeing. Giusto sighs, and weeps, and talks of his miseries and his grave, like the rest of his despairing brethren, and it is all owing to this "Beautiful Hand" ; which he represents as so unspeakably cruel and tormenting, and as giving such dreadful squeezes and grips to his heart, that you begin to think there is something as bad in it as in the beautiful hand of Madame de Brinvilliers, which was in the habit of despatching people out of the world with poison.

Giusto died in the year 1449 ; and in the year preceding was born the first writer of sonnets, after Petrarca, that combined with a coloring from that poet an impulse and character of his own. This was no less a person than Lorenzo de' Medici, — a man to whose abilities and accomplishments, as an advancer of the accomplishments of others, as a statesman, social philosopher, wit, and poet, I cannot think that justice has yet been done. His biographers, notwithstanding their elegance and their good-will, appear to have wanted both depth of insight and sufficient animal spirits for the task. To-day this extraordinary person was communing with Plato, and to-morrow dancing with his fellow-citizens : to-day ruling the state, — a very difficult state to rule, — to-morrow laying down the laws of a sonnet : to-day patronizing Politian or Michael Angelo, to-morrow testing the accounts of his factors, enjoying a cargo of antiques and new books, making merry with Pulci, discussing philosophy with Ficinus, originating a new form of satire or species of pastoral, or corresponding with popes and kings, and arbitrating the affairs of all Italy.

But the Sonnet is the business of this book ; and we must not be tempted to dilate on the collateral merits of its writers.

The sonnets of Lorenzo for the most part betray, it must be confessed, the too common misfortune of almost all the writers of sonnets in Italy ; they are injured by the fact of their being imitations : otherwise the style natural to him is so racy, and some of them exhibit so much of it, that it is evident he might have been as charming a model in this class of poetry as he was of

the pastoral above intimated, or of the songs for people to dance to on the First of May.*

I have given this distinguished writer of sonnets precedence in point of time to another, who was born fourteen years earlier, but who does not appear to have made his productions known so soon to the world. This was Boiardo, author of the *Orlando Innamorato*, — a poet whose singular good fortune it is delightful to contemplate ; for he was rich, noble, prosperous, cheerful, admired, and beloved. His sonnets partake of Petrarca's, like the rest, and he devotes the requisite portion of them to sighs and tears, not without intimation that these clouds were but sets-off to his sunshine. The remainder are so much of a piece with the prosperity of his life, that they are remarkable for a brightness like that of glad

* I allude to the May Songs in the editions of his works devoted wholly to himself, and not to those in the carnival-song collections, which may or may not be his, and which I have heard charged with licentiousness, — I have never happened to see them. — The manners in Lorenzo's time were much freer than in ours, and its writers are to be judged accordingly ; nor are the edited works above mentioned exempt from objection in passages. With respect to Lorenzo's maintenance of the power of his house in Florence, — which, having said so much of him, I feel bound, as a lover of liberty, to notice, — my conscientious opinion of it is, after a close perusal of Napier's Florentine History, — himself a lover of liberty, and an honest denouncer of Lorenzo, — that the turbulent and ever-quarrelling Florentines had never understood real liberty, or cared for it ; that, next to merchandise, and a good deal of ordinary enjoyment, little but a struggle for power was ever going on among them ; that Lorenzo, great man as he was, and a lover of the prosperity of all classes, was not himself great enough to be the founder of the highest kind of free state, but thought that, as some Florentine house or other must finally rule, his own had better be that house, both for self-interest's sake and the people's.

eyes, and for a sweetness amounting to the honeyed. His style has been accused of being a little too off-hand and colloquial ; but this, which Ginguené seems to think incompatible with elegance, and which Boiardo's countryman Panizzi justly thinks otherwise, — or perhaps it should rather be said, with grace, — only serves to complete the charm of its felicity by testifying to its truth. The poet was a Lombard, and often spoke as happily in his Lombardisms as Homer and Chapman did in provincialisms of Greece and England.

The *Orlando Innamorato* is one of the four great poetic romances of Italy : the *Morgante Maggiore* of Lorenzo's friend Pulci, which appeared a little before it, is another. The natural idiomatic style of these poets, without putting an end to the worship of the common idol, caused unintentionally a reaction against the style of Petrarca, and this reaction was so increased by the influences of wars and commerce, which enriched uneducated men, and raised peasants and common soldiers to princely power, that, about thirty years after the production of the sonnets of Boiardo, Bembo, subsequently cardinal, an accomplished philologist, who like Petrarca had been bred in courts, and who, though a Venetian, had been much in Florence and fallen in love with the elegances of the Tuscan poet, set all his wits to the restoration of the latter's authority, — an enterprise in which he succeeded so fatally to himself, that his quondam fame as a Petrarchist of genius is now degraded into that of having been a servile imitator. The little spark of originality within him occasionally shows itself ; but you are forced — as Pulci might have said — to poke at it and blow it up, like a spark in ashes.

Had Bembo's friend Ariosto written many sonnets, the world might have possessed a new Petrarca ; not as spiritual indeed as the other, for the sensuousness of his temperament was too strong for Platonizing, but of a kind thoroughly new and peculiar. Ariosto's sonnets are few for an Italian poet, — not more than six and thirty, — and they are not without tributes of imitation to the lover of Laura ; but one of them at least is full of character, and his passion, for the most part, is anything but sighs and groans.

It was to a poet of far less fame, but of a nature not unallied to Ariosto's in wit and sense, that the Italians attribute the first great innovation on the Petrarchal pattern of sonnet, — the first variation upon his theme and upon his music. This was another friend of Bembo's, and a third ecclesiastic, — for Ariosto himself was an ecclesiastic, — namely, Giovanni della Casa, who became an Archbishop, and, it is believed, would have been a Cardinal had it not been for some licentious poems which he wrote in his youth, and which his rivals persisted in keeping before the Papal memory. Casa was author of the well-written and estimable book on manners, entitled *Galateo*, and also of the pleasant and innocent banter on the name of John, — his own, — which some of the readers of this Essay may have seen translated, and which was made another ground of objection to his preferment, because John was a name in Scripture ! You might be an Archbishop and have joked about John, but you must not be a Cardinal ! At such gnats was the Papal throat made to strain, while it swallowed camels, by the dozen, of nepotisms and bad faith.

The great, and what was at first thought audacious,

innovations of Casa upon the authority of Petrarca, or rather upon the received system of the Petrarcists, consisted in his breaking up the flow of his lines, and introducing words and thoughts more remarkable for their strength than sweetness. He went so far—which Petrarca did very rarely—as to run the quatrains into one another and even into the terzettes; and though faithful to the system in some respects, seemed to take a delight in being as heterodox in others as possible, and caring for nothing but venting his rugged good sense. Tasso, who rebukes imitators for copying only the harshness of Casa, praises him for the more exalted qualities of expression, imagination, and grandeur. He admired him so much as to devote a whole lecture to a single one of his sonnets,—no unusual honor paid by poets in those days to sonnets, but seldom by such a poet as the author of the “Jerusalem Delivered.”*

Contemporary with Casa, and a successful innovator in another direction, was Angelo di Costanzo, an historian of his country, Naples. Costanzo took pains to restore the logical system of sonnet which prevailed before the time of Petrarca, adding to it an amount of feeling which neither that poet nor Dante might have disdained, but too frequently spoiling all with elaborate conceits and cold epigrammatical conclusions. Thus he argues in one of them, that the sight of his mistress being at once delightful and killing, it follows that, although death is the worst of losses, there is a loss worse than death itself. And in another, finding it impossible

* The Lecture is to be found both in Tasso's works, collected by Professor Rosini, and in those of Casa himself, as published at Venice in the year 1728, vol. i. p. 339.

to live without seeing his mistress, however angrily she looks upon him, he makes up his mind to the interview, because it is "better to be deprived of one eye than to become wholly blind." Yet these puerilities were admired not only in his own time, and long afterwards, but as late as the continuation of Ginguené's "Literary History of Italy," by Salfi, who has seldom shown his inferiority to his predecessor so strongly. Ginguené himself, who for the most part is a very discerning as well as engaging critic, was sometimes, notwithstanding his ridicules of bad taste, inclined to push his liberality too far in the indulgences of whimsical conceits, and triflings with reflection; but he would not have eulogized, with Salfi, the studied logical sequences and insipid surprises of Costanzo.* And yet, towards the close of his sonnets, this same poet, moved by the death of one of his sons, opens such a real vein of unaffectedness and pathos, that I felt inclined to beg his pardon for all which I had been thinking to his disadvantage. The laughter which his metaphysical love-sorrows had provoked ended in tears for the father. He has also left a beautiful ode on this subject; and one of his sonnets addressed to some distinguished writer shows Costanzo to have been not only a very modest man, but a right friend and gentleman. I begin to think, while writing this passage, that in some of his other sonnets he must have been jesting. In one of them he has condescended to imitate, if not banter, a strange compliment paid to a mistress by another writer of sonnets, — Antonio Broccardo. Costanzo tells his lady, that as she and he will

* *Histoire Littéraire d' Italie*, tom. ix. p. 344. Salfi himself makes an exception to the sonnet noticed by him at page 349.

certainly be condemned, both of them, to eternal punishment, he trusts that his torments will be rendered delightful to him — “dolci e gioconde” — by the sight of her face, which will then be divested of its pride ; while, on the other hand, her sufferings will be tempered with the excess of the pleasure which she will feel in witnessing his “unparalleled misery.” At the same time, however, he fears that, as they have both sinned in equal measure, — she for too little love, and he for too much, — their sentence, in order to equalize their punishment, will condemn them to undergo it in quarters remote from one another ! The only thing which Salfi appears to object to this sonnet, besides its want of originality, is the look of inconsistency between the delight of the poet’s torments and their unequalled wretchedness. Muratori, as he observes, has no fault to find with it, except that it is hardly proper in a lover, under any circumstances, to suppose his lady in Hell !

I have dwelt a little longer than I intended on the sonnets of this writer, in order to show how an infection of bad taste may reach both to good poets and good critics ; for Salfi, upon the whole, is not unworthy of Ginguéné ; and Muratori, though a Petrarcist in excess, too easily pleased with his brother enthusiasts, and not profound enough to sound the depths of Dante, was in general an acute as well as learned critic, and worth hearing on most points relating to poetry.*

* Salfi refers to page 316 of the second volume of Muratori’s *Perfetta Poesia*. In my copy of that work, — the Venetian edition of 1770, — the page is 244. I speak of the only work of Muratori’s with which I am acquainted. Crescimbeni, another esteemed though ultra-laudatory critic, and inferior to Muratori, held Cos-

In the time of Costanzo flourished three ladies distinguished for their sonnets, though, unfortunately, not for the happiness due to their virtues. These were Vittoria Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, who at the age of thirty was deprived of her husband in battle, and died his sorrowing widow at fifty-seven ; her friend Veronica Gambara, another mourning widow, relict of Giberto, Lord of Correggio ; and Gaspara Stampa, a Paduan of Milanese origin, who was deserted by her idol, a Count of Collalto, for another lady, and is said to have died in consequence. Her sonnets, the effusions of an evidently sincere and cordial woman, are full of loving complaints of the Count's infidelity. I possess engraved portraits both of her and of the gentleman ; the one a face and bust worthy of such a woman ; the other handsome too, intelligent, and soldier-like, — for he was a soldier, — but hard and imperious. A later tradition has been found, which says that she recovered her loss, and was happily married, — a very desirable and much wiser termination to a sorrowing love-story. Gaspara's sonnets, as I well remember, exhibit a nature qualified to enjoy existence thoroughly ; and it is not difficult to suppose that a lover of like disposition would persuade her to do it justice.

The short and splendid, though not quite unequivocal career of Vittoria's husband, D'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara, who was a soldier and statesman actively concerned in the wars and intrigues of the Spanish succession to the

tanzo's sonnets in the highest estimation ; and it is not improbable that he may have spoken the sentiments of his friends Zappi, Redi, and Filicaia. Salfi notices Crescimbeni's recommendation of the sonnets as models.

throne of Naples, served to throw a lustre like a perpetual sunset on the melodious sorrows and life-long devotions of his widow. Of the doubts of his integrity she evidently knew, or believed, nothing. In body, mind, and soul, he was considered by her as perfection ; and she accordingly wrought her poetical tributes to his memory with an elaboration of elegance that, in spite of their acknowledged merits and tenderness, has been thought by some injurious to their perfection. The motive, however, makes all the difference between what is to be well or ill thought of such painstaking. The splendid memory, she thought, deserved a splendid monument ; and her very modesty might have led her to undervalue a simpler expression of her grief. Besides, the tears do, in reality, beautifully break in, where, to the eyes of these critics, they sometimes appear least spontaneous.

In the effusions of the other worthy lady, Veronica Gambara, I do not find much individual character. But probably I have not seen them all.

Tasso, a great name, who follows these lesser lights in point of time, has left us sonnets that lie as thick as stars in his firmament ; many of them faint enough, as if with his sickness or misfortune ; but others, splendid and grand ; much as what you might conceive Milton himself to have written, had he been an Italian of that age, and bred under the like circumstances ; stately, self-reverencing, and with a pomp of music and color. In others again it is piteous to see how this pride is brought low by the calamities of disease and imprisonment. The twofold luxury of temperament, brought upon the poet by his genius and his Southern gardens, was occasionally too much for him, — enfeebled him for his adversity.

Tasso, however, though he had closely considered the subject, did nothing peculiar for the sonnet, as such, apart from the dignity conferred on it by his style. The best of his compositions of the kind, and of his other lyrical productions, his odes in particular, are worthy of him; and that contribution to the renown of the sonnet he justly thought enough.

Tasso, among his other luxuries, indulged himself in a few faults of exuberance and verbal trifling, even in his great poem; and these, and Costanzo's, and every other poet's, Italian and Spanish, that could administer to the enormity, were brought together in one stifling heap by another Neapolitan, the celebrated corrupter of Italian poetry, Marini; whose sonnets are almost as innumerable as his conceits. Marini — sometimes called Marino — was the greatest and most profuse master that ever appeared of all that is adulterate in false poetry. Imagine whatsoever is objected to in style or matter by the words floweriness, prettiness, tawdriness, affectation, antithesis, and glitter, and you have it all to an excess in Marini. Cowley's and Donne's worst condescensions to conceit were nothing to it, at least in point of number. Petrarca would have been astounded to see the not unnatural inclusion of such fancies in his own love, turned into an ostentatious and countless display of them, to the destruction of all passion and sentiment. The consistent inconsistencies, — to use their own style, — of burning and freezing at one and the same time, of flying and pursuing, presence and absence, cruelty and kindness, and every other species of similarity and dissimilarity, the stars of eyes, mouths full of pearls and rubies, nets made of tresses, plays and

turns upon words, triflings with rhymes and echoes, splitting of straws, and riots in impossibilities, make a chaos more like a clatter of Bedlamites, than of men even stultifying themselves on purpose. What was a passing fancy in Tasso or Petrarca became in these writers an elaboration of nonsense. Shakespeare, catching from Southern poetry a whim in the collocation of words, through the medium of Sidney and Spenser, has a line in which he speaks, — and very allowably and pleasantly speaks, considering it is a line and no more, — of the

“Courtier’s, scholar’s, soldier’s eye, tongue, sword.”

The followers of Marini have whole sonnets full of this kind of underwriting ; a term which they delight in literally warranting ; as in the sonnets of one Domenico Vaniero : —

“M’ arde, impiaga, ritien, squarcia, orta, e preme,
Foco, stral, nodo, artiglio, impeto, e peso.”

Me burns, wounds, binds, rends, shocks, and presses,
Fire, dart, knot, talon, violence, and weight.*

A foolish critic of this school, Federigo Meninni, a name provocative of a pun, wrote a whole volume on

* Sir Philip Sidney, whose judgment had not come to its “years of discretion” when he wrote the *Arcadia*, has a whole sonnet of this kind in it, in which the system is carried to its utmost height of perverted ingenuity ; as the reader may judge from the first quatrain : —

“Virtue, beauty, and speech did strike, wound, charm,

My heart, eyes, ears, with wonder, love, delight :

First, second, last, did bind, enforce, and arm

His works, shows, suits, with wit, grace, and vows’ might,” —

and so it goes on to the last, the series of nouns and verbs being all drawn out of one another in orderly consequence and dependence.

The work is full of other imitations of the Italians, bad as well as

“Sonnet and Canzone,”* in which all these absurdities are adduced as proofs of excellence. He comprises them in one general class of *arguzie*, or *points*; which he looks upon as the consummation of poetry; and in answer to Marini’s objectors, quotes with triumph the applauses bestowed on that poet by his two most celebrated disciples, Preti and Achillini; one of whom said, that, if ancient writers could have seen his works, they would have hated their own in proportion as the times which they lived in had loved them. And Achillini, in a letter written to Marini, tells him, — not in jest, but in gravest sincerity, — that he is a greater poet than “any that was ever born, whether among Italians, or Latins, or Greeks, or Egyptians, or Arabs, or Chaldees, or Hebrews.” Marini, however, thinking more of Jew brokers than of the fine poetry of David or the Prophets, did not like the word “Hebrews”; saying in displeasure, “Don’t you know that I have no fancy for tinkering old pans?” He thought that everything old was to be considered inferior to his novelties.

Meninni, quoting a passage in which his idol speaks of “mortal fire burning the body, while the soul escapes eternal fire,” bids us observe, that here “fire is similar yet dissimilar in the mortal and in the eternal relation,

good, especially in the metrical varieties of the verses in it. I must take this opportunity, however, of observing, that the good of the *Arcadia*, in every respect, far outweighs the bad. It has many passages of great beauty both of thought and expression, besides a curious story, managed with singular delicacy and refinement; and I must add, to the honor of the sex, that I never recommended the perusal of it to a woman who did not thank me for so doing.

* *Il Ritratto del Sonetto e della Canzone*, &c., &c. Venetia, 1678.

dissimilar in respect to body and to soul, and dissimilar also as regards burning by fire and escaping from it." And he adds a quotation from a sonnet of his own on the death of Adonis, in which having said, in allusion to the story of Cadmus, that "if life once issued from the teeth of a dragon, death is now enclosed in the teeth of a boar," he tells us that here is "similitude as to the teeth, and dissimilitude as to their being the teeth of a boar and of a dragon"; also "in issuing forth and in being enclosed," and finally, "in life and in death."

If history did not show us how absurd human beings and whole nations could become in greater instances, it would be difficult to believe that such nonsense could ever have been a national passion. Yet such it was, and for a long time; and, what is more surprising, the great exemplar of it was a man of genius, able to write true, and even noble poetry; nor were these followers of his, Preti and Achillini, without passages of a true vein. But agreeably to one of the sayings of their master, the disciples preferred "pleasing the living to pleasing the dead"; forgetting that the living would be dead in their turn, and the good repute of the pleasers die with them.

It was about twelve years after the death of Marini, that Milton, in the course of his tour in Italy, visited Manso, Marquis of Villa, the patron of that poet and of Tasso. Milton in the beautiful Latin poem with which he repaid the civilities of Manso, seems to have felt himself called upon to praise both Tasso and Marini; but he contrived rather to imply than acknowledge the claim as regarded the latter. He associated him nominally with Tasso; but applied an epithet to his exuberant

poem, the *Adonis*, capable of being taken in a good or bad sense, according to the reader's inclination.*

Milton, curiously enough, is the next distinguished poet in the order of time who wrote sonnets in the Italian language. For the most part they are very different in point of taste from those of the Marinesque poets; though how far the admirers of the latter might have been justified in finding fault with the phraseology, I am not qualified to pronounce. I can only discover that they contained phrases not common, and wearing a look of antiquity. An accomplished Italian gentleman told me that they were not free from an admixture of the styles of different ages; and Milton informs us in a Canzone that the young gentlemen and ladies who read them rallied him on his venturing to write love-verses in a tongue not his own. Perhaps they saw the mixture of styles, and did not like to mention it. Perhaps also they missed the taste in vogue; which may account for his having in one instance complied with it. It is in the sonnet beginning "*Per certo i bei vostri occhi*," which, with its sunshine of eyes and vapors of sighs, is positively Marinesque. Warton, in a note upon it, says, "He was now in the land of conceits, and was infected by writing in its language." The rest of the sonnets, however, are not in this strain; though, considered as love-verses, it is not to be wondered that the sensuous Italian age considered them fail-

* "*Prolixus*" was the word. In English the meaning of it has generally been derogatory; at present is always so. But in Latin it might imply, and usually did, we believe, an exuberance of a rich and generous kind. The root of the word, *lix*, appears to have been the same as that of *liquor*.

ures. They are too stately, self-exalting, and stoical. The greatest compliment which the young poet stoops to pay to a beautiful singer is by thinking it desirable to "stop his ears"; and to another lady he gives a list of his own virtues, and talks of not being afraid of the thunder of a universe. The sonnet, however, in which he thus announces his powers of defiance, has justly been thought personally characteristic.

In the year in which Milton visited Italy, died Chiabrera; a man whose wilful, fiery genius, and ambition of discovering new worlds in poetry, — which he said that, like his countryman Columbus, he would do or perish, — was in danger of swamping his name with posterity in the same gulfs with Marini, had not the Genoese poet been saved by a robuster and more northerly temperament, a more solid learning, and perhaps by the determination to be "alone in his glory." Chiabrera introduced into Italian poetry the regular Greek ode, with strophe and epode; attempted to naturalize Greek forms of speech and compound epithets such as *chiomindorato*, *riccaddebbato*,* etc., and aspired to be the modern Anacreon as well as Pindar. Nor do his countrymen dispute the claim; though his coloring was more gorgeous than delicate, and his style more diffuse and luscious than simple and sweet. Chiabrera, however, evinces considerable grace at times, great majesty at others, and a magical power always of making much out of little. I hardly

* *Golden-haired, richly-mantled.* One is surprised that the Italian language rejects what is so easily and happily admitted in English; but so it is, and I am not prepared to account for it, especially as words in Italian poetry are so accustomed to glide into one another.

know whether I ought to have said so much of him in this book, as he has left but few sonnets. There is something in these of a combination both of his Pindaric and his Anacreontic propensities. But he seems to have disliked the restraint of the sonnet. It is difficult, in speaking of these Italian poets, or of any poets who have at all interested us, to avoid lingering over the mention of them, and sketching something of their portraits. Nor indeed can they be thoroughly known upon particular points, unless we are aware of their characters in general. Chiabrera has a fine line upon Columbus respecting the circumstances under which the great mariner made his first appearance in the world, and met everywhere with rejection. He reminds "the great vulgar and the small," how they once despised the

"Nudo nocchier, promettitor di regni." *

* "The naked seaman, promiser of kingdoms."

In the brief account which this fiery poet left us of his own life, the reader is not a little startled to find him alluding to more than one instance of his having avenged himself of injuries, to an extent that is generally kept in the darkest silence, and not supposed possible in a man of his pursuits. Respecting the first occasion, which happened at Rome when he was a student, he simply uses the two words "avenged himself"; alleging that he had been "outraged for no fault of his own," by a Roman gentleman. On the second occasion, he says that, getting into brawls — also "for no fault of his own" — and remaining "slightly wounded," — *ferito leggermente*, — he avenged himself "with his own hand." It is to be feared, from these additional words, that in the former instance there was a "hand" concerned in the vengeance. The first of these avengements cost him ten years' effort to obtain pardon; the latter many months' absence from the Genoese territory. Yet either the circumstances were held so exculpatory, or the crime pardonable on some such extraordinary account or other, that no man appears

The counteraction furnished by Chiabrera's favor with courts and princes against the popular influence of Marini is thought by some to have been the entire cause of its ultimate destruction; but the probability is, that it was only one of the causes, and that the main cause was its own excess. The absurdity naturally wore itself out; bad taste can as little be the normal condition of things as bad health; and literary plagues disappear before the breath of reason and good sense, as others do before air and cleanliness.

Marini's influence, however, notwithstanding the counteraction of Chiabrera, took no little time in declining. It may be said to have prevailed, more or less, from the closing period of the sixteenth century, till the same period in the seventeenth, when a set of poets arose who combined the good sense of the French school of criticism, as represented by their chief, Boileau, with such perceptions of the poetical, as enabled them to set the gravest as well as liveliest counter-examples of their own; and these put an end to the Marinesque delusion forever.

afterwards to have led a more honored, healthy, and even happy life, than this seeming prototype of a dark figure in a romance. Chiabrera lived at Rome or at Genoa as he pleased; was welcomed in every city in Italy; princes and princesses caressed him; he died in his native place aged eighty-six; and the Pope — Urban VIII. — wrote his epitaph. It should be added, that he was a very devout Catholic; wrote furious invectives against Luther and other reformers, calling them "beasts," "monsters," and "carriers"; and among all the eulogies on distinguished and undistinguished men which he otherwise lavished wherever he went, he took care not to say a word of the Pope's quondam friend Galileo, who was found guilty — as Milton says — of differing with the Dominican friars in astronomy.

I speak of Redi, the charming author of the *Bacco in Toscana*; of Menzini, the satirist; of Maggi and Lemene, who were at once devotees and men of humor; and of the "great Filicaia," as others besides Wordsworth called him,—a truly lyrical poet, full of sensibility and enthusiasm, which were nevertheless under the control of a lofty judgment. Redi, physician to the Grand Duke Cosmo II., and Filicaia, one of his senators, were compatriots closely united. Menzini, another Tuscan, was a professor of rhetoric. Maggi, who was Greek professor at Milan, and Lemene, resident minister from Lodi to that city, were as closely united as Redi and Filicaia; but all the five poets were friends and fellow-workers, and all distinguished writers of sonnets. Redi led the way with recurring to the manner, not only of Petrarca, but of Dante, and Filicaia closed it with some of the finest sonnets in the language. Redi, who was a distinguished physiologist as well as poet, was the experimentalist who put an end to the doctrine of equivocal generation. He disproved the old notion, immortalized by Virgil, and prevailing down to his own time, that bees arose out of the carcasses of oxen. It is pleasant to see him helping to undo a like notion that good poems could rise out of the corruptions of men's wits.

With these poets became associated in literary, if not so much in personal respects, Guidi, an ecclesiastic at Rome, who may be styled an irregular successor of Chiabrera, — for his lyrics despise the restraints of strophe and antistrophe, — and Zappi, a jurist in the same city, whose sonnets, full of grace and originality, stand prominently forward as *sui generis*.

Guidi wrote few sonnets, but they are not unsuitable

to his lofty and genuine, though somewhat presumptuous vein. Zappi wrote many ; and his and the sonnets of Manfredi, a Bolognese astronomer, who was born a little later, may be said to close the list of such Italian poets as gave celebrity, lasting or otherwise, to this class of composition. I wish I could think those of Manfredi worthy of his reputation ; but in such as I have seen — and I believe I have seen most, if not all — I can find nothing of mark.

Strangely and unfortunately enough, the very zeal in Italy for the restoration of good taste, which set Redi and his friends upon opposing their sonnets to those of the followers of Marini, was made the ground for a fantastical movement on the part of some inferior men, which occasioned a new enfeeblement of the national poetry, though of another sort. The circumstance is curious enough to warrant a more particular mention of it than has yet been given, I believe, in an English book ; and as our friend the Sonnet became the principal sufferer, I will here notice it accordingly. The story is one of a truly Italian kind, though not of the sort to which the readers of Sismondi and Mrs. Radcliffe have been accustomed. There are quite as many grown children in Italy as in other countries, — indeed, far more than in most, — notwithstanding all that has been thought of its being full of nothing but monks and assassins.

Crescimbeni, the future historian of Italian poetry, an enthusiast, but a mediocrist, both in verse and prose, was sitting, — his biographer tells us, — one summer's evening, on the “grass in a green meadow, enjoying himself with some friend in the recital of certain beauti-

ful pastorals," when the pleasure of coming together in this manner so delighted one of the party, that he cried out, "It seems to me, that we have restored Arcadia to-day." The words struck them all, Crescimbeni in particular; and the consequence was the institution of a society for the restoration of good taste in poetry, under the title of "Arcadians," with the future historian himself for the *Custode*, — *keeper* is the English word; and in England it would have been thought much fitter for the officer of a society so called, than for the gentleman who locks up the doors of the Royal Academy; for these poetical Academicians actually played at shepherd and shepherdess! They took pastoral names; received gifts of imaginary lands in the Grecian Arcadia; and assembled in a woody garden to recite verses, and compliment one another on inspirations from the God Pan. The society was organized in the year 1690, during the reign of our William the Third. In England, the proposal for such a body corporate would have been received with shouts of laughter. In France, the society would have anticipated the scenes of Watteau, — the gallantries and effeminacy of the days of the Regent Duke of Orleans or Louis the Fifteenth. But a project that would have appeared ridiculous to the subjects of King William, and that would have been perilous to decency among those of Louis the Fourteenth, was so mixed up with better things in these imaginative, and, strange as it may seem, most unaffected people, the Italians — for such they are — that, so far from disgusting a nation accustomed to romantic impulses, and to the singing of poetry in their streets and gondolas, their gravest and most distinguished men, and in many instances wo-

men too, ran childlike into the delusion. The best of their poets accepted farms in Arcadia forthwith ; lawyers and clergymen followed in abundance ; monks, Jesuits, nobles, princes, cardinals, even men of science, all gave in their adhesion ; one of the cardinals, on becoming Pope, did not withdraw his name ; it figures conspicuously in the list ; and so little transitory did the fashion turn out to be, that not only was Crescimbeni its active officer for eight and thirty years, but the society, to whatever state of insignificance it may have been reduced, exists at the present moment. A suite of apartments in the Vatican was given it by Pius the Sixth, and plentiful use made of its rhymes by the Jesuits, whom he restored. *Counter-act them with better, O poets of England and America !* Englishmen themselves, not long since living, were counted among its members, — Mathias, the author of the “Pursuits of Literature,” for one. Joseph Cooper Walker, who wrote the “Memoirs of Tassoni,” and “Historical Memoir on Italian Tragedy,” was another ; and, I think, Hayley was a third ; to say nothing of the Della Cruscans, and Mrs. Thrale.

The Arcadians, in the account given of them by their *Custode*, persuaded themselves, that their object in thus coming together to play at shepherd and shepherdess, and recite their effusions, was the restoration of the good taste that had been spoilt by Marini ; and they boasted that they had attained their object. But Chiabrera, and the other poets that came after him, had begun the reformation already, and though the founders of the society fell in with it, the society itself unfortunately did but ultimately produce a new decline of Italian poetry in regard to dignity and strength. If it had not been

for Alfieri and Foscolo, for Pindemonte, and for the genius universally though unworshipfully possessed by the unswerving Monti, there appears even to have been a chance of another *Macrausque* epidemic in the effusions of some friends of the person to whom allusion has just been made, as known in England by the title of *Della Crusca*, — English letters in Florence who wrote such stuff as required no greater catalyst to undo than Mr. Gifford.

Growing disgust in Italy at church and state fortunately incorporated better tastes of all kinds; Leopardi, Manzoni, and others appeared full of the power inspired by indignation; and though the disappointments of the Italian patriots have driven most of the writers that came after these poets into the bitter enjoyments of satire and burlesque, yet there is a tonic in the bitter, good for all good causes; and our friend the Sonnet, delivered from his ensnarlments, has failed neither to administer his proper balm when required, nor to wield against despotism and bigotry such terrible cuts of nine tails as their enormities compelled him to take in hand.

But this new aspect of our friend has brought us to a point in his character which I have yet to describe.





V.

OF OTHER LEGITIMATE BUT OBSOLETE FORMS OF THE SONNET, PARTICULARLY THE COMIC SONNET.

THE form of sonnet to which this Essay has hitherto referred admits of varieties little suspected by those who have not happened to wander out of the customary tracks of Italian reading. When I first met with them, they struck me with some such agreeable surprise as we experience when we find grave acquaintances unexpectedly amusing ; and as the intimacy advanced, and I saw into what extravagances they could run, I seemed to be admitted among the same acquaintances when they were indulging in pastimes at once organized and extravagant, such as the “ High Jinks ” recorded of Counsellor Pleydell and his friends, in the delightful pages of Walter Scott.

The prevailing form itself, when it took its precedence in old times, did not hinder poets, for a long while, from writing sonnets in lines of eight syllables or less, from adding a line or two to the fourteen by way of supplement, or even from interspersing supplementary lines to the quatrains and terzettes, under the denomination of *Codas*, or *Tails* ; so that to a modern English reader, the

octave which is made of these quatrains looks sometimes — under the impression of that idea — like a barrister's wig with the two tails jerked sideways, and the whole sonnet like a wig tasselled with tails throughout. Among others of inferior note, there were *Duodenary Sonnets*, or sonnets in the twelve-syllabled lines called by the sensitive Italian ear *versi sdruccioli*, slippery or sliding verses, on account of their terminating in dactyls — *tènĕrĕ*, *Vènĕrĕ* — ; *Mute Sonnets*, a term characteristic of almost all Sonnets written in English, the muteness consisting of rhymes in one syllable ; *Continuous* or *Iterating Sonnets*, which had but one rhyme throughout, or sometimes no rhyme at all, every line terminating or commencing with the same reiterated words, or word ; *Answering Sonnets*, or sonnets in answer to other sonnets, the rhymes of which were repeated in exact correspondence but with dissimilar meanings ; *Retrograde Sonnets*, which read the same way forwards and backwards, somewhat after a like fashion of some verses of the ancients ; *Chained* or *Linked Sonnets*, in which every successive verse began with the rhyme or last word of its antecedent ; *Interwoven Sonnets*, in which the lines not only rhymed as usual, but in the middle or other parts of the verse also ; *Crowning Sonnets*, or a series of them joined together for purposes of panegyric, so as to form a supposed crown for the head of the person lauded ; lastly, *Caudated* or *Tailed Sonnets*, which, besides including the forms under that name above mentioned, gradually took augmentations which were increased *ad libitum*, and on the strength of that privilege established themselves as the regular *Comic Sonnet*, and became very popular.

The reader will have observed that several of these forms are more puerilities, and require no further notice. When written on serious subjects, one is surprised how poets of any worth could put *other* thoughts into frames so fantastic; and yet this was done by all the four great poets of Italy with the exception of Ariosto, — a man, be it observed, who combined the comic faculty with the serious, and therefore understood the boundaries that divided “the sublime from the ridiculous”; though from the very enjoyment of the knowledge he sometimes took a pleasure in steering closely between them. In Dante’s miscellaneous poems, besides worse though shorter vagaries of a similar kind, there is a dull pleasantry or piece of gravity, one hardly knows which, in which the changes are rung upon five terminating words through a series of seventy-six lines.

Petrarcha condescended to the like thing, in the more ordinary shape of *sonnet*: that is to say, stanzas of six blank verses, with terminations common to them all; and Tasso has a *Sonnet* on the death of a prince, in which the only terminating words of the lines are *pace* and *guerra*, — *pace* and *guerra*.

What was absurd, however, when gravely intended, became amusing as a jest. The following is a specimen. It is a *sonnet* with no greater variety in its terminations than those of the *sonnet* of Tasso; but the jest makes all the difference. The author of it was a wit of the noble family of the Fucci. Varchi, the Florentine critic and historian, who was the subject of it, and who was himself a distinguished writer of *sonnets*, must have felt inclined to apply to it the epithet which Plautus gives to the language of his dancing Prince Hic. Varchi had

used a freedom in criticising Petrarca's famous Canzoni on the eyes of Laura which gave offence to the poet's admirers ; at least so I gather from the story, for I have not seen the criticism. Pazzi took up their cause, and sung the critic's name in his ears after the following provoking fashion :—

“ Le Canzoni degli Occhi ha letto il Varchi,
 Ed ha cavato al buon Petrarca gli occhi ;
 E questo lo vedrebbe un uom senz' occhi ;
 Cosa, per certo, non degna del Varchi.
 Teneva ogni uomo per fermo, che il Varchi
 Fosse de la Toscana lingua gli occhi,
 E ch' ei sapesse ogni cosa a chiusi occhi,
 Tal che ingannato ognun resta del Varchi.
 E come già ognun bramava il Varchi,
 E non pareva se ne saziasser gli occhi,
 E ogni lingua dicea, Varchi, Varchi ;
 Così ora non è chi volga gli occhi
 In quella parte dove passa il Varchi ;
 Tal che il Varchi vorria non aver occhi.”

The “ Eyes ” of Petrarch have been read by Varchi,
 And Varchi has put out the poor man's eyes,
 As any one may see that has no eyes ;
 A thing, I must say, not becoming Varchi.
 People used formerly to think that Varchi
 Was of the Tuscan tongue the very eyes ;
 One that saw all things, though he shut his eyes ;
 A point on which they were deceived in Varchi :
 So now, whereas all used to long for Varchi,
 And not a soul could satiate his eyes,
 Or cease vociferating Varchi, Varchi,
 Nobody thinks it worth troubling his eyes
 To give, as he goes by, one glance at Varchi ;
 So that poor Varchi fain would have no eyes.

Varchi, who was a conscientious critic and a great admirer of Petrarca, was very angry ; and Pazzi, who not-

withstanding his jest, appears to have been a good-natured man, gave him the "soft answer" which "turneth away wrath."

The *Mute Sonnets*, or comic sonnets rhyming in monosyllables, are mostly without the *coda*; tails, though frequent adjuncts, not being necessities to sonnets of a comic nature. It is impossible for English readers to be as much entertained by these mute sonnets as Italians are. The abundance and flowing beauty of dissyllables in the Italian language caused their rhymes in general to be dissyllabical: English rhymes, on the contrary, are for the most part monosyllabic; and hence, by a curious contrariety in their association of ideas, the Englishman thinks he doubles the jest of his verse by doubling the rhyme, while the Italian, to enforce the point of his, reduces his two syllables to one. The terminating dissyllable, to the Englishman,—at least whenever he chooses to think so,—easily acquires a tone of levity and the ludicrous. He respects the short and decided step, the firmness and *no-nonsense* of his monosyllable. To the Italian, on the other hand, the repetitions of it on these occasions jar against all his feelings of gravity. They affect him much as if he saw a man taking a series of unexpected jolting steps down a staircase, or receiving—or giving—so many equally unlooked for punches in the stomach. It would take a long residence in England or America to enable an Italian to see the jest of the double rhymes in "*Hudibras*"; and it would take no less time in Italy to qualify the Englishman for a perception of the fun residing in the monosyllables of Berni or Casti. As imagination however may help the reader in either case, especially if he has a turn

for the ludicrous, and as I wish to make this Essay as complete in itself as I can, I here give a specimen of the mute sonnet from this scapegrace Casti. A long poem, all in masterly double rhymes, would be thought a great feat in English verse. Casti has written two hundred sonnets on one subject, all in masterly single rhymes, and in a style which his countrymen admire for its idiomatic purity and its classical correctness. It is a pity he had not written all his works in the like unobjectionable vein. The jovial poet pretends — or perhaps the subject was founded on some actual poetical fact not incredible in the annals of a man of his way of life — that he was dunned by an implacable creditor for the sum of three *Giuli*; that is to say, for some fifteen pence or thereabouts. A *Giulio* is a small silver coin of one of the Popes of that name, — Julius. Casti says that he is waylaid by this creditor at every turn; that the debt mingles with all his thoughts, and has made his life miserable; that he sees no way of escaping from it; that the man's death will not deliver him, because he is a married man with children, therefore will leave heirs to the demand, who from their tenderest infancy will be "little creditors," — *creditorelli*, — all tormenting him for the fifteen pence with hereditary importunity; and so he goes on "piling up the agony" through his two hundred sonnets; which he ends not by paying the debt, but with bidding his creditor good-night "forever." It is true, he bids farewell to the *Giuli* also, but only as a theme parted with, not as an account settled. To settle the account would have been to destroy its immortality.

Gray, in the course of his "Long Story," ingeniously says, "Here five hundred stanzas are lost." A reader

of Casti's *Giuli Tre* may wonder that he did not close his book with a sonnet of the species before-mentioned, called the sonnet with a tail. It is one commencing with the usual fourteen lines, but possessing an unbounded privilege of adding to their number; so that the poet might have dismissed his book into space, like a paper-kite, furnished with a tail beyond that of a comet.

Of this tailed species of sonnet, more anon. Here follows the sample of Casti:—

Ben cento volte ho replicato a te
 Questa istessa infallibil verità,
 Che a conto mio da certo tempo in quà
 La razza de' quattrini si perdè.
 Tu, non ostante, vieni intorno a me
 Con insoffribile importunità,
 E per quei maledetti Giuli Tre
 Mi perseguiti senza carità.
 Forse in disperazion ridur mi vuo',
 Ond' io m' appicchi, e vuoi vedermi in giù
 Pender col laccio al collo? Oh questo no.
 Risolverommi a non pagarti più,
 E in guisa tal te disperar farò,
 E vo' piuttosto che ti appicchi tu.

I've said forever, and again I say,
 And it's a truth as plain as truth can be,
 That from a certain period to this day
 Pence are a family quite extinct with me.
 And yet you still pursue me, and waylay,
 With your insufferable importunity,
 And for those d—d infernal Giuli Tre
 Haunt me without remorse or decency.
 Perhaps you think that you'll torment me so,
 You'll make me hang myself? You wish to say.
 You saw me *sus. per coll.* — No, Giuli, no.
 The fact is, I'll determine not to pay,
 And drive *you*, Giuli, to a state so low,
 That you shall hang yourself, and I be gay.

Of the Tailed Sonnet, or sonnet with a *coda*, England has been in possession of a specimen for these two hundred years, without knowing it. The author is no less a person than Milton, and the sonnet has received an abundance of notes from his editors, though, strange to say, not one of those gentlemen, albeit they included readers of Italian, knew what it was. They all put it under the head, not of his Sonnets, but of his Miscellaneous Poems. Warton, it is true, speaks of it as forming an "irregular sonnet"; but this only shows that he was not aware of its being a regular one; for such, of its kind, it is. It is a comic sonnet after the regular Italian fashion, in all its forms; that is to say, a composition consisting of fourteen lines of the usual structure, followed by a *coda* or tail, of one or more joints of eight syllables rhyming with its precursor, and two others of the customary length rhyming by themselves. Generally the tail is shorter than the body; sometimes, as before observed, much longer. I have a comic sonnet of Berni's now before me, with a tail extending beyond a couple of pages.

The inventor of this class of sonnets was moved by a genuine comic impulse. Humor is by its nature overflowing. The writer felt a disposition to run out of bounds; the bounds themselves produced a temptation to break them; the very restriction thus became a warrant for the license; and the form of the grave sonnet was preserved, in order to enhance the gayety of its violation.

It is curious, that the solemn and stately Milton should have been the first English writer to introduce a comic stranger to his countrymen. The stranger how-

ever, it must be owned, has become unusually solemn in his company. He jests ; but his jest is too fierce and bitter to have a comic impression. The sonnet is the famous attack on the Presbyterians of the Long Parliament, beginning

“Because you have thrown off your Prelate Lord.”

The present book would have contained it ; but as ladies, it is hoped, as well as gentlemen, will read the book, and the sonnet of the indignant poet contains a word, which however proper for him to utter in his day, and with the warrant of his indignation, is no longer admitted into good company, the effusion has been left out. A similar objection, oddly enough, applies to the only other sonnet of the kind in our language. It contains a phrase equally warrantable on the writer's part, yet equally difficult to read aloud.* Another stately poet, Tasso, has a comic sonnet of this description on

* An oath, to wit, of an honest seaman, who thinks that the eyes of Italians have no right to be saved, if they look with scorn on the fogs of his native country. The sonnet, which is full of humor, is addressed to a Fog. It appeared in the first volume of Bentley's Miscellany, page 371 ; and was written by my lamented young friend Egerton Webbe, whose wit, scholarship, and rare powers of reflection, would have rendered him one of the ornaments of the nation. Mr. Webbe was as thorough a gentleman in his own language as in every other respect ; but when describing characters, he thought it incumbent on him, like Smollett and others, to omit nothing characteristic that pens were considered privileged to repeat.

[On reflection, I have put this sonnet in these volumes, leaving a space to be filled up, or otherwise, by the reader with words of his own, according to his notions of propriety. Ladies themselves, or their brothers for them, can easily find some three monosyllables as innocent in their eyes as the originals are in those of the seaman.]

Cats. At least, he intends it to be comic ; and it would have been particularly appropriate for insertion in this part of the Essay, because it closes with an analogy between the tails of cats and the tails of sonnets. But it is too poor ; especially in comparison with his other and famous sonnet to *Cats*. The only other specimens of the Tailed Comic Sonnet, to which I can refer at present, with one exception, are those in the collection of poems called the *Parnaso Italiano*, and are chiefly the production of Berni, the greatest Italian master of burlesque ; but they are too full of local and personal allusion to interest the general reader, — indeed, are not thoroughly intelligible to anybody without the help of notes ; and the editor of that work, like too many editors of his nation, had an absurd habit of seldom giving any headings to what he selected. You read sonnet after sonnet, and ode after ode, without knowing the persons to whom they are addressed, or, often, what they are about. I therefore take the specimen furnished me by the same critical work, in which I found the sonnet on Varchi. It is the production of Grazzini the novelist ; and is one of those caricatures of a personal discomfort, which, having a foundation in truth, please us the more, the more they are exaggerated by the animal spirits, which thus enable us to bear the annoyance.

Io vo farvi saper, caro Bettino,
Com' io sto, e qual è la vita mia :
La febbre credo averla tutta via,
E non posso patir nè pan, nè vino :
Non vo' del corpo punto, ne miccino.
La notte poi, quando dormir vorria,
Sento far le zanzare armeggeria,
E le mie gote sono il Saracino.

Altre ne l' aria si stan borbottando
 Un certo orribil suon, pien di terrore,
 Che farebbe paura al Conte Orlando.
 Altre dipoi ne vengono a furore
 Inverso il viso mio, forte ronzando ;
 Mi dan trafitte che ne vanno al cuore ;
 Io per l' aspro dolore,
 E per farne vendetta, con gran furia
 Mi batto il ceffo, e fommi doppia ingiuria ;
 Elle tornano a furia,
 Trafiggendomi più di mano in mano,
 Ed io mi dò ceffate da marrano.
 E questo giuoco strano
 Mi convien far per fino a lo mattino ;
 Che venir possa il canchero a Bronzino.

" Dear Benedetto, — not to let you pine
 For want of news of me, this comes to say,
 My fever grows upon me day by day,
 And bread I can as little bear as wine ;
 Judge how I must detest your turkey and chine.
 At night, when I would sleep, to my dismay
 I hear the gnats arming them for the fray,
 And all they burn for, are these cheeks of mine.
 Dread note of preparation ! hideous hum !
 First comes in air an awful mustering sound,
 Fit to have scared Orlando from his blast ; *
 Then, raging, upon eyes, nose, mouth, they come,
 Each trumping louder betwixt wound and wound,
 Setting my wits and very soul aghast.
 Fairly made mad at last,
 I start up in the bed, and to the rout
 Put them too well, by cuffing my own snout ;
 They, madder, turn about,
 And rage as if they said, — '*You rout us ! — Never.*'
 I sit on, cuffing myself worse than ever :

* When he blew his horn in Roncesvalles.

Desp'rate and vain endeavor !
 They quit me not till morn. By heav'ns ! I think
 'T would make a very statue snort and blink."

We do not understand the meaning of the last line about a "plague on Bronzino." It seems either a proverbial execration, or an allusion to his contemporary and friend, a brother humorist of that name, author of some witty verses in the *Parnaso Italiano* on an imaginary present of a horse. Perhaps it was in a bedroom belonging to Bronzino, that the suffering from the gnats was experienced, owing to the want of a gnat-net, or *zanzaliere*.

We return a moment to the sonnet on Varchi, with its limitations of the verses to a couple of terminating words, in order to say that Crescimbeni, in the third book of "Commentaries" on his "History of Italian Poetry," has given his readers a specimen of the sonnet which iterates but a single word. Every line of it terminates with the word "Argo." It is the solution of a riddle on the ship of the Argonauts ; but is not worth repeating. That no form of sonnet, however, which has appeared, and which is of the least interest, even as a curiosity, may be wanting to these pages, I shall make bold, on the strength of the Anglo-American nature of the book, to finish the present portion of my theme with a sonnet of my own, written on the same plan, but on a subject which can be devoid of interest nowhere.* I can speak thus of it with the less immodesty, inasmuch as the reader will see that it is a thing easy for anybody to write, the plan and the subject being once found.

* The single word, to be sure, is double, that is to say, a compound word ; but the spirit of the thing is the same.

ITERATING SONNET,

Written during the Talk of a War between England and the United States.

War between England and the United States !
Impossible ! Pshaw ! Stuff ! — “ United States ! ”
Why, they themselves are the United States :
London and Boston are United States :
New York and Liverpool United States :
Cotton and spinning very United States :
Progress and liberty, United States :
Their names, fames, books, bloods, all United States.
But “ bloods are up ” in the United States ?
Well ; — would ’ st have “ low ” bloods in the United States ?
No : high bloods — high — in both United States :
So high, that, seeing their United States,
They scorn to stoop from such United States
Solely to please poor *dis*-United States.





VI.

OF ENGLISH SONNETS, AND OF THE SONNET ILLEGITIMATE, OR QUATORZEN.

CONSIDERING that the love of Italian poetry has always been greatest in England when English genius has been in its most poetical condition, it is not a little remarkable, that the oldest known sonnet in our language dates no farther back than the reign of Henry the Eighth. It is a translation of a sonnet of Petrarca, and is the production of the noble-minded Sir Thomas Wyatt, who in several of his poems had the courage to aim the most cutting side-blows at the cruelty and effeminacy of that brutal tyrant.

How are we to account for the non-appearance of a sonnet in the poems of Chaucer? — of Chaucer, who was so fond of Italian poetry, such a servant of love, such a haunter of the green corners of revery, particularly if they were “small,” — of Chaucer, moreover, who was so especially acquainted with the writings of Petrarca’s predecessor Dante, with those of his friend Boccaccio, and who, beside eulogizing the genius of Petrarca himself, is supposed to have made his personal acquaintance at Padua? Out of the four great English poets, Chaucer is the only one who has left us a sonnet of no kind whatso-

ever, though he was qualified for every kind, and though of none of the four poets it would seem more naturally to have fallen in the way.

The secret, I conceive, lay in one of three reasons ; perhaps in all three combined : first, that the Anglo-Norman court which he served had so close a connection with France as to lead him, when he was not writing his narrative poetry, rather into French miscellaneous poetry than Italian ; second, that the sonnets neither of Dante nor Petrarca had yet followed into England the great poem of the one, or the fame of the Latin poetry of the other ; and third, that Chaucer's propensity to narration and character was so truly his master-passion in poetry, as to swallow up all the rest of his tendencies in that direction. It is observable, that, with the single exception of the beautiful and stately exaltation of his mistress's merits, beginning

“ Hide, Absalom, thy giltè tresses clear,” —

(which indeed is like a strain of music coming before a queen,) Chaucer's lyrical productions are few and trifling. The second of these reasons, however, I take to have been the chief. Had Chaucer been familiar with the sonnets of men whom he so admired, the very lovingness of his nature would hardly have failed to make him echo their tones.

Wyatt, who came long after these poets, was born in the same year with Casa, whom we have seen purposely roughening the Sonnet, because it had grown too sweet with time. England's first sonnet, in Wyatt's hands, is as rough as if poetry itself had just been born in the woods, among the ruggedest of the sylvan gods. It is

not repeated in this book. I extract one other, which does a little more justice to the writer. But I mention the former in order to observe, that, in common with almost every one of Sir Thomas's sonnets, it abides by the forms of the Legitimate Sonnet ; and I may be allowed to add, in reverence for this excellent person, that although he continued for the most part to be a rugged poet, and was at all times rather a good and great man than a master of verse, he showed that he could translate smoothly as well as nobly from another Italian poet, Alamanni, one of whose satires he condensed into an invective of so much force and vehemence against the court of Henry the Eighth, as must have struck even the hard heart of that ruffian with awe and astonishment.

The first English sonnets that possessed anything like Italian music were the production of Wyatt's young friend, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who is justly ranked among the most elegant and promising of our early poets. He perished at thirty years of age, on a ridiculous pretence, by order of the tyrant whom they both hated ; nor is it improbable, that one of the sonnets extracted into this book, — the one commencing "The Assyrian King, in peace, with foul desire" — was the real cause of the murder.

As Wyatt was the first introducer of the Sonnet into his native language, so he was the first, though but in one instance, to set the example of a departure from its laws, and thus introduce the Illegitimate Sonnet. All the rest of his thirty-two sonnets are of the authorized construction. Those of Surrey, which are scarcely half as many in number, are either wholly illegitimate, and setters of the pattern generally followed in England till

lately, or they run upon one rhyme, till they close with a couplet in another, — a form not without precedent in Italian poetry, though very rare. None are destitute of merit ; and there are three in the present volumes successively characterized by truth, tenderness, and strength.

It is a curious circumstance, in the history of sonnets, — and might be thought to tell in their disfavor, if the cases were not exceptional, manners of times to be considered, and the vast majority of sonnets of a different description, — that so many of them turn upon illegal attachments. Dante who makes a saint of Beatrice, and ultimately of himself too, and who marries her, as it were, in Heaven, never breathes a syllable of her husband. Nobody would suppose that there had been such a casualty in the lady's life. Beatrice, for all that appears to the contrary, is always the unmarried Beatrice that Dante first became acquainted with, — the same Beatrice Portinari. The married woman, Beatrice de' Bardi, is a gentlewoman never heard of. It is the same with Petrarca. Nobody would dream, from his three hundred sonnets, that there was a gentleman of the name of De Sade, who had a right to ask him " what he meant." The poet ignores the husband during the whole of the lady's life on earth ; and when the lady dies, she equally ignores the husband, and invites the poet to come and live with her in Paradise. This looks, in both instances, as if there must have been some remarkable reasons for the conduct, with which readers are unacquainted. Casa, the next famous sonnet-writer to Petrarca, is understood to have addressed his love-verses to a married lady of the name of Quirino. He was an ecclesiastic ; who is a person in Roman Catholic coun-

tries that is not permitted to marry ; and hence an ecclesiastic, on the principle of extremes meeting, is understood to be the most married of all men. Almost all the love sonnets of Alfieri are addressed to the wife of the second English Pretender, on whose death — from drinking — the poet is understood to have been married to her. The course of my subject has brought me to Sir Philip Sidney, the Stella of whose sonnets was Lady Rich, the wife of a husband who is said to have been as bad as the Pretender : and soon after Sir Philip, we shall meet with Shakespeare, the mysterious heroine of whose sonnets was evidently a person by no means belonging to the household of the great poet. The history of marriage would make a strange history : beautiful and devoted in many instances ; ugly and unfitting in others ; mixed up in all — though not by the parties — with causes feudal, fiscal, and ecclesiastical, some of which, originating in Roman Catholic times, lie at the root of all which injures the ordinance, and being taken away, would render it fitter to go to an altar than ever it has been yet.

I need not add, that in the present collection of sonnets there is not a single verse which is objectionable. In those from Shakespeare the love is of so true a nature, that as it is not known to whom all his love-sonnets were addressed, and more than one lady might have been concerned in them at different periods of his life, we may hope that the object of the best of them was no less estimable than adored.

Sir Philip Sidney, with an additional and almost Shakespearian flow of ideas, was a very Italianate person in his writings. He acquired from Italian books a portion of

their conceits as well as beauties ; took from them the title, and something of the style, of his "Arcadia"; made it, like theirs, a mixture of prose and verse ; and in the verse introduced so great a number of their forms of composition that it would have been strange had he never written sonnets after their fashion. The reader will find one or two of them in this collection, highly characteristic. One in particular sounds like the last note of courtly chivalry. It may not be thought unworthy of remark, that the first three introducers of the Sonnet in England, Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Earl of Surrey, and Sir Philip Sidney, were all knightly and accomplished men.

It is not a little curious, that in spite of this example on the part of his friend Sidney and others, and a great love for Italian poetry on his own, the first man that wholly and studiously set aside the Italian pattern of the Sonnet, should be Spenser. I say *studiously* set aside, because the form which he invented for it in its stead, appears to have been the result of repeated experiments.

The poetical student, I think, will not be uninterested by a sight of these experiments. The first, strangely enough, is in blank verse, — a speculation unique of its kind. The second is in three elegiac quatrains, like those of Gray's "Country Churchyard," ending with a couplet ; which is the form that was adopted by Shakespeare. The third, which Spenser finally adopted, linked the three quatrains together by means of a rhyme out of each.

It is no little addition to the strangeness of the first of these experiments, that six out of fifteen sonnets which

the poet has thus given in blank verse compose a translation of one of the odes of Petrarca, the twelve-lined stanzas of which he has enlarged for the purpose. And he appears to have been so bent on making them strictly regular sonnets in other respects, that all of them but one exhibit, by means of stops, the most marked Italianesque division into quatrains and terzettes. The specimen, however, here laid before the reader is translated, not out of Petrarca, but from the fine old French poet, Bellay, or rather — to pile curiosity on curiosity — from a Dutch version of the Frenchman.*

“ I saw a fresh spring rise out of a rocke,
 Clere as christall against the sunny beames,
 The bottome yellow like the shining sand,
 That golden Pactol drives upon the plaine :
 It seemed that arte and nature strived to joyne
 There in one place all pleasures of the eye.
 There was to heare a noise alluring slepe
 Of many accordes, more swete than Mermaid’s songs.
 The seates and benches shone as ivorie ;
 An hundred Nymphes sate side by side about,
 When from nie hilles a naked rout of Faunes
 With hideous cry assembled on the place ;
 Which with their feete uncleane the water fouled,
 Threw down the seates, and drove the Nimphs to flight.

If the guess of Spenser’s biographers be correct in dating his birth “probably about the year 1553,” the poet must have been sixteen when he wrote these blank-verse sonnets, for they were published in the year 1569, which was that of his entrance into the University.

* See Todd’s edition of Spenser, vol. i. p. v., in *Life*, and vol. vii. p. 525. I have no hesitation in attributing these blank-verse sonnets to Spenser, not only for the reasons there given, but from the poet’s whole character, both as a man and a gentleman.

Youths went much earlier to the University in those days than they do now. How Spenser came to be acquainted with the Dutch language does not appear ; though there was much intercourse with the Low Countries in those days ; and English words possess keys to Dutch. It was easy also to get somebody to help him to a prose version. Upon the whole, the sonnets are worthy of the boyhood of such a man. You may see his noble and sweet notes commencing in every one of them. Yet observe how rich the strain has become in his version of the same sonnet, published some twenty years afterwards. I seize the opportunity of adding it, because it furnishes a sample of the illegitimate species of sonnet above alluded to, which is called Elegiac, and which formed the second of the author's experiments in sonnet-making :—

“ I saw a spring out of a rocke forth rayle,
 As cleare as christall gainst the sunnie beames,
 The bottome yeallow, like the golden grayle *
 That bright Pactolus washeth with his streames :
 It seem'd that Art and Nature had assembled
 All pleasure there for which man's hart could long ;
 And there a noyse, alluring sleepe, soft trembled,
 Of manie accords, more sweete than Mermaid's song :
 The seates and benches shone as yvorie,
 And hundred Nymphs sate side by side about ;
 When from nigh hills, with hideous outcrie,
 A troupe of Satyres in the place did rout,
 Which with their villeine feete the streame did ray, †
 Threw down the seats, and drove the Nymphs away. ‡

* Gravel.

† Beray, — befoul.

‡ Whether this version of Bellay's Sonnet was from the Dutch or the French, it is very close to the French original.

In the form of his third and last experiment in sonnet-making, which, like the blank-verse specimen, was an entirely new one, Spenser wrote all the sonnets which he finally published when he was forty years of age, under the title of *Amoretti*, — Little Loves. The title is good ; but compared with what was to be expected of them, these Little Loves — not to speak it irreverently — are rather a set of dull, middle-aged gentlemen, images of the author's time of life, and of the commonplace sufferings which he appears to have undergone from a young and imperious mistress. Spenser gave the world to understand, though in words the reverse of disparaging to the lady, that he married, as the phrase is, "beneath him." If the heroine of the sonnets was this lady, as she is believed to have been, it is not improbable that she was at once rendered proud by the homage, and secretly mortified and irritated at not knowing how to receive it ; that is to say, how to respond to its refinements. When her admirer's love is at its happiest, it is only by comparison with something the reverse. The following sonnet is one of the best. It partakes of his sweet modulation ; and one of the lines, "Through the broad world," has the strength of his full hand upon it. The reader will bear in mind, with regard to this form of sonnet, what has been said of its substitution of a third quatrain and a couplet for the two terzettes, and its linking all the quatrains together with a rhyme out of each.

Mark when she smiles with amiable cheare,
And tell me whereto can ye lyken it,
When on each eyelid sweetly doe appeare
An hundred graces as in shade to sit.
Lykest it seemeth, in my simple wit,
Unto the fayre sunshine in somer's day,

That when a dreadfull storme away is flit,
Through the broad world doth spread his goodly ray ;
At sight whereof, each bird that sits on spray,
And every beast that to his den was fled,
Comes forth afresh out of their late dismay,
And to the light lift up their drouping hed.
So my storme-beaten hart likewise is cheared
With that sunshine, when cloudy looks are cleared.

This form of sonnet never became popular. It is surely not so happy as that of the Italian sonnet. The rhyme seems at once less responsive and always interfering ; and the music has no longer its major and minor divisions. It is not indeed easy to conceive what induced the inventor of the beautiful stanza of the "Faerie Queene," with its fine organ-like close, to employ so inferior a construction in all these eighty-eight sonnets called *Amoretti*. Finding perhaps how much his first rhyming invention was admired, he too hastily thought to succeed in another, and failed as authors' second enterprises, when so suggested, are apt to fail. For it is genuine love of the thing that inspires a first invention ; whereas self-love too often aims at the second ; and self-love is no such singer as love. Yet Spenser, in his mature days, never wrote but one sonnet in any other form. To my ear there is something in it of the teasing nature of Dante's *terza rima*, which is a chain that seems as if it would never end, and is dragged after him by the presumptuous poet through his next world, like a retribution. It is observable that the *terza rima* was never again used by the Italians in a long poem ; at least, not in any that has survived. They confined it to satires, to didactic poetry, and to familiar epistles.

But I fear I am writing too much upon Spenser.

Spenser's friend Raleigh left us so excellent a sonnet on the "Faerie Queene," that it makes us wish he had written a thousand ; or rather, that he had devoted his whole life to poetry, instead of the pursuits that ruined him. Raleigh's fate was singularly unlucky. He had a fine vein of poetry, which he scarcely touched : he believed there was a region of gold in the New World ; and there was, — but he missed it. He had the glory of discovering Virginia, but was unable to colonize it ; and he obtained the favor of Queen Elizabeth, and was the terror of the foes of England, only to be imprisoned and put to death by her unworthy successor. He had much better have stuck to his Gentleman-Pensionership, and confined his conquests to the pen. His pen was very like a sword. You see, in this one little sonnet,* what possession he takes of the whole poetical world, in favor of the sovereignty of his friend Spenser. He was not exactly in the right ; but when did conquerors consider the right ? The sonnet is of the least artistical order, as to construction, consisting only of the three elegiac quatrains and a couplet ; and it has the fault of monotonous assonance in the rhymes ; yet it flows with such nerve and will, and is so dashing and sounding in the rest of its modulation, that no impression remains upon the mind but that of triumphant force.

Shakespeare's hundred and fifty-four sonnets are of the same unartistical construction as this of Raleigh ; and you think of it as little, for similar reasons. His total neglect however of the Italian form, in connection with as entire a silence in regard to the poets of Italy,

* The sonnet beginning,

"Methought I saw where Laura lay."

to their works and their names, — for one would think it hardly possible that such a poet should put not a word respecting such brother poets in the mouths of any of his Italian gentlemen and ladies, — tends to go counter to the opinion which has been entertained of his acquaintance with Italian literature, and even with the Italian soil. A visit to Italy by Shakespeare is a thing delightful to fancy, and it is a pity Mr. Knight did not make a chapter of one in his conjectural biography, — a species of writing, by the way, strangely objected to ; for what better entertainment can admirers of great men desire, than to live thus in their company through every probable phase of their existence ? But on the above accounts alone I cannot believe in these Italian experiences of Shakespeare ; to say nothing of other such reasons as his mixture of Latin with Italian names in his *Dramatis Personæ*, and his mispronunciation of Italian names at all liable to the mistake ; such as *Ròmeo* for *Romèò*, *Viola* for *Viùla*, and *Desdemòna* for *Desdèmona*. The great dramatist, it is true, was not in the habit of speaking of other writers, however he may have admired them ; but if he had visited Italy, or been conversant with Italian books, he would have known that nothing was more common for educated Italians than to quote and express admiration for their native poets ; and his gentlemen and ladies of Verona and other places, might have been expected, in their various wit-encounters and love-makings, to act accordingly. In the year when Shakespeare is supposed to have been in Italy, 1593, Tasso was at the height of his fame. Chiabrera also, and Marini, were flourishing ; Petrarca had never ceased to flourish ; and Dante's verses were in all serious mouths,

and Ariosto's in all lively. How came it, that neither Shakespeare nor his characters ever took the least notice of them?

But I am digressing from my purpose. Be all this as it may, Shakespeare's sonnets, like the rest of his productions, conquer all objection. Obscure and perplexing as some of them are, others contain passages of as exquisite poetry as any he wrote, and the best of them are veritable jewels. It is not easy to call to mind anything more loftily beautiful than the sonnet beginning,

“Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,” —

anything more humbly and then exultingly beautiful than the one beginning,

“When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,” —

or more deeply and affectingly beautiful than

“No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
Than you shall hear the surly, sullen bell,” etc.
. “For I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.”

All the tears, tenderness, and generosity of the truest love are in that passage. The reader, I hope, will find the very best of these sonnets in the present book. I do not say the “best”: those would be too numerous; but only the “very best,” — those which surpass the surpassing.

Among the miscellaneous poems of Ben Jonson are a few sonnets, two of which are of the legitimate order, but hardly worthy of him. One of the others, very characteristic, is inserted in this collection.

Learned Ben Jonson's learned friend, Donne, not only wrote some five or six and twenty sonnets, almost all of which are of the legitimate order, but he is the only English poet, as far as I am aware, who has given us a Crown of Sonnets, after the fashion alluded to in the preceding section. It comprises the first seven of his "Holy Sonnets"; and in reference to the native country of the fashion, he has entitled it *La Corona*. It has fine passages, and I wish I could extract it into this book, as a specimen of the class it belongs to; but Donne's piety, though sincere, was not healthy. It does not do justice to the Divine Goodness. Fortunately the best sonnet he wrote, though it is upon a subject on which, generally speaking, he was in more than one sense of the word least happy, — Death, — is equally unexceptionable and noble.

The sonnets of Shakespeare's other contemporaries, Daniel and Drayton, are of a like construction with his own, but very different in substance. Daniel, it might have been supposed, would have given them some of the fine thoughtfulness observable in his other productions; and Drayton some of his real though sparse vein of poetry. But neither are to be found.

The next best sonnet-writer to Shakespeare, in point of time, is Drummond of Hawthornden; and he has a value of his own. I use the old local designation in speaking of him, for we have not too many such, and it would be an especial pity in his case to let it drop, for he was a genuine lover of trees and bowers, and deserved the good fortune — rare for a poet — of possessing an estate in the bosom of them. Drummond's sonnets, for the most part, are not only of the legitimate

order, but they are the earliest in the language that breathe what may be called the habit of mind observable in the best Italian writers of sonnets ; that is to say, a mixture of tenderness, elegance, love of country, seclusion, and conscious sweetness of verse. We scent his "muskèd eglantines," listen to his birds, and catch glimpses of the "sweet hermitress" whose loss he deplored. Drummond was not without the faults of prototypes inferior to those writers. His Italian scholarship in some measure seduced, as well as inspired him ; but upon the whole his taste was excellent ; and he leaves upon his readers the impression of an elegant-minded and affectionate man.

Drummond, though an extreme, was an honest Tory. He wrote bitterly on the crimes of the Court of James the First ; though he sided vehemently with Charles in the civil wars. Milton took as vehement a part on the other side. Both these poets, however, might have met on the beautiful neutral ground of poetry, and compared sonnets and Italian books. One touch of *Sonnet* makes *all parties* kin.

If a complete specimen of the legitimate sonnet in all its demands, both of uniformity and variety, could have been expected of any English poet, Milton was the man ; for he was a poet willing to show his learning ; he was a musician ; and he could write sonnets, as we have seen, in their native language. Yet it is remarkable that, although all the sonnets of Milton, English as well as Italian, are of the legitimate order, and though he was an honored guest in Italy at the time when the reaction was beginning to take place in favor of its purest and best writers, he has hardly left us one in which the received

rules respecting the division of quatrain and terzettes are not broken, and the music of the whole fourteen lines merged into a strain of his own. The strains, except in one particular, are good ; most of the sonnets good ; some of them noble and beautiful ; one of them rejoices in the recollection of "Tuscan airs," and it might be supposed that the writer would have modulated his notes accordingly, and shown what variations he could make of his own, after the Tuscan manner.

Not so. The sonnets are entirely such as I have described, with this unmusical and therefore remarkable deterioration, that they are unhappy and monotonous in their rhymes. Few of them, either English or Italian, are exempt from this fault. The two most affecting sonnets — the one on the *Massacre of Piedmont*, and that on his *Deceased Wife* — are so full of them that a writer of Spanish *asonantes* would say that they had but two rhymes throughout. The two quatrains of the latter sonnet give us no rhymes but in *a*, and the terzettes none but in *i*. (*Saint, grave, gave, faint, taint, save, have, restraint, mind, sight, shined, delight, inclined, might.*) Criticisms on rhymes appear trifling and hypercritical, and in the case of long poems would be so ; but they are otherwise in respect to compositions that are at once so brief and so full of musical requirement as sonnets.

Most affecting, nevertheless, are those two sonnets ; noble the one on the *Assault Intended to the City* ; charming the *Invitation to Lawrence* ; and masterly in passages all the rest.

"Soul-animating strains — alas ! too few."

Why did not Milton write a sonnet on every cheerful,

mournful, and exalting event in his life? Why do not all poets do so? I mean, when they are not too happy or too unhappy to speak. What new and enchanting volumes of biography we should possess!

With Milton the sonnet disappeared from English poetry for nearly a hundred years. The unromantic school of French poetry, which came into England with the restoration of Charles II., put an end to that of the Italians; and the sonnet fell into such disrepute, for a still longer period, that it has not been set quite right perhaps, even yet, with the "reading public." The countenance that was given it towards the close of the last century, by sequestered scholars like Gray and Warton, availed it little. At the beginning of the century, Pope, in his "Essay on Criticism," said of a supposed despicable performance by a "person of quality,"

"What woful stuff this madrigal would be
In some starved hackney sonneteer, or me!"

and towards the close of the century, Johnson, sneering at Warton's poetry, — not without an insinuation against that of Gray, — says, that wheresoe'er he turns his "view,"

"All is old and nothing new;
Tricked in antique ruff and bonnet,
Ode, and elegy, and sonnet."

Johnson little suspected, that before half the next century was over, his own poetry would be thought stale-ness itself compared with that of Gray; and as little did Pope suspect that a professed sonneteer — Wordsworth — would be looked upon by many persons as the greatest English poet since the time of Milton.

The sonnet, in truth, as a form of poetry, is disre-

spected by none but those who are unacquainted with its requirements ; and had not the poets and wits of the reign of Anne been ignorant of Southern literature to a degree which is surprising, considering their love of books, — nay, had they not even been unacquainted, or at least unfamiliar, with the miscellaneous effusions of the greater English poets who preceded them, — they would have blushed to make a by-word of a species of verse which, with more or less attention to its laws, had been cultivated by all the greatest poets of Europe, those of their own nation included.

The sonnet rose again, like a transient promise in spring, or like a morning at once ruddy and weeping, in the solitary one by Gray on the death of his friend West. Wordsworth, in a spirit of hypercriticism which it is a pity he had not spared for his own sake, found fault with what he called the artificial language of this sonnet, and with the introduction of “Phœbus, lifting his golden fire.” As if a man so imbued with the classics as Gray, and lamenting the loss of another man equally so imbued, whose intercourse with him was full of such images, could not speak from his heart in such language ! Similar fault — which it might have been thought would have warned Wordsworth off such ungenial ground — had been found by Johnson with Milton’s classical lament of a deceased friend and fellow-student, in the beautiful poem of “Lycidas.” Not only did Milton and Gray speak from the heart on these occasions, but perhaps, had they not both so written, they had not spoken so well. They would not have used language so accordant with the habits of their intercourse. And the image in Gray’s sonnet is beautiful for its own sake, and beautifully put : —

"In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire."

We are too much in the habit of losing a living notion of the sun ; and a little Paganism, like this, helps, or ought to help, to remind us of it. More particularly ought this to have been the case with Wordsworth, who, when it suited him, wished to have been "suckled in a creed outworn," and to have

"Sight of Proteus* coming from the sea,"

rather than witness round about him the belief in nothing but every-day worldliness. "Phœbus," in this instance, is not a word out of the dictionaries, but a living celestial presence.*

* I was surprised to find the other day, in reading a passage of his *Biographia Literaria*, which had escaped my memory, that Coleridge, though he differs in other respects with the criticism of Wordsworth on Gray's sonnet, and indeed with the particular ground of objection to this line about Phœbus, finds fault with it still more severely on another, affirming that it has "almost as many faults as words." He accuses it of "incongruous images," of confusion of cause with effect, or "the real thing with the personified representative of the thing,"—in short, of difference from "the language of good sense." It is unpleasant to differ on a point of criticism with Coleridge ; but I must do so in this instance, even to the extent of retorting his own words ; for the charge appears to me "incongruous" with what he, as well as Wordsworth, thought of Johnson's charge against "Lycidas" ; it confounds a warrantable use of the Pagan image with ordinary commonplace, assuming at the same time that the epithet "reddening" was intended to be understood in the neuter, and not the active, sense of the participle ; and finally, on all these accounts, it differs from the "language of good sense." Coleridge's criticism in general was as subtle and beautiful as his poetry ; and I should dissent from it in this instance with becoming diffidence, if it had not been inconsistent with its own spirit and its own letter.

Gray's sonnet is of the legitimate order, though not of the commonest. Those of Thomas Warton, who followed him, are so too; and some of them express real feelings with an elegance so scholarly, so simple, and so full of faith, that no universalist in the love of poetry who has once read them chooses to part with them.

The sonnets that appeared in England between the times of Gray and of Wordsworth are generally of a workmanship inferior to that of both. Yet the species of composition is so favorable for expressing a real feeling, whether it be a cheerful one requiring no greater compass, or a mournful one too painful to enlarge upon, that truthfulness of impulse has, in not a few instances, given permanent value to a sonnet for nothing but the general impression left by it on the reader's mind, or even for that which has been made by a single verse. The sigh, or the sweetness, of a whole life seems now and then to breathe out of a single sonnet, and readers cherish the memory of it accordingly, even when they are masters of the art. A few sonnets of Bowles's, on this account, made an indelible impression on the mind of Coleridge; and Coleridge's praises have helped them to live on. Indeed, far greater poet as he was, his own sonnets, for the most part, are inferior to those which have been selected from Bowles in the present volume.

Anna Seward was a woman of great natural abilities, spoiled by premature admiration, and by the homage of a country town; but her sonnet on rising of a winter morning to read her books, while the fire is blazing, and the white houses of her neighbors looming in the dark, comes home to everybody who has had the like experience; and the effusion is cherished accordingly.

Helen Maria Williams was another woman of great natural abilities, with a correcter taste, though her poetry is of a still more conventional cast than Miss Seward's ; yet one of her sonnets made such an impression on Wordsworth that she records with a just pride his having repeated it to her, years afterwards.

Several of Charlotte Smith's sonnets — the one to the Moon in particular — are popular for their truth alone. Their powers either of invention or expression are nothing, save in the ability to reject what is false and superfluous ; yet that single merit is a thing so necessary to excellence, and so rare, that everybody likes the sonnets because nobody doubts their being in earnest, and because they furnish a gentle voice to feelings that are universal.

Most of the sonnets of these ladies and of Mr. Bowles are of the illegitimate order ; which consequently became such a favorite with lovers of easy writing who could string fourteen lines together, that, notwithstanding the biographies of Roscoe, and the republication of Italian poets and critics by Mr. Mathias, it continued to fill the press with heaps of bad verses, till the genius of Wordsworth succeeded in restoring the right system.

Of the world of thought, feeling, and imagination contained in the many sonnets which have enriched this class of composition from the pen of Wordsworth, so much has been said of late years by so many writers, myself among them, that to notice it further in this place might be thought superfluous. I must only beg leave to observe, that in a quotation made in Mr. Housman's "Collection of English Sonnets," from some remarks of mine on the subject, there occurs an omis-

sion of some words respecting Milton, which leaves an impression — unintended I have no doubt — as though I considered the author of “Paradise Lost” not merely a less rich and abundant sonneteer than Wordsworth, but a less poet. On the contrary, in the midst of warm eulogies of Wordsworth, I had felt myself bound to say, that there could be no comparison in point of greatness between the genius, however fertile and admirable, manifested in his contemplative effusions, and the mighty epic-sustaining powers of Milton. I must also take this opportunity of observing, that, considering the less advanced nature, in some respects, of the times in which Milton lived, Wordsworth did not show anything like equal enlargement or independence of mind. He was too much afraid of what is called “committing himself”; and the weak and misplaced notion of strong-mindedness, which induced him to devote a portion of his sonnet-warblings to advocacy of the “punishment of death” — as though a nightingale should encourage the vigils of a hangman — was deplorable.

The sonnets of Coleridge, who, when he did his best, appears to me to have been a more thoroughly poetical, that is, purely imaginative poet than Wordsworth, are not answerable to that idea of him. Most were written in his younger days, when his style was conventional, and his genius did but reveal itself by glimpses. Yet I have retained more than half of them, partly for the sake of such glimpses, and partly because they contain other traits personally characteristical of their author.*

* In preferring Coleridge's poetry to Wordsworth's, I allude chiefly to the “Christabel” and “The Ancient Mariner.” But there is also, I think, in his love-poetry a tenderness and unprosaical sim-

Of the other distinguished poets between that time and this, whom I refer to in a body because their sonnets were few, and, generally speaking, the care bestowed on them little, the only memorable ones, I think, are those extracted into the present volume, of which Keats's magnificent sonnet on *Homer* stands at the head. Shelley ought to have been a fine and abundant Sonneteer ; for he was full of thought, feeling, and music. His sonnet on *Ozymandias* has the right comprehensiveness of treatment, and perfection of close. But though he was always longing for them, he never could content himself in these sequestered corners of poetry. He was always, so to speak, for making world-wide circuits of humanity.

The sonnets extracted from Charles Lamb are happy evidences of what has been said of the desirableness of founding such compositions on special personal experience. Lamb, though a wit and humorist of an exquisite kind, was not habitually a poet. He sat at the receipt of impressions, rather than commanded them. He had not fervor enough to be a poet, not imagination or fancy enough at will, and little or no perception of music. He was the creature of nerves, and thoughts, and a trying private history which needed consolation ; and his fine natural sense found it in those necessities of reaction against sorrow, which brighten wit by the contrast, and discern humors by the force of sympathy. His younger and more ambitious efforts in verse are for-

plidity, a pure unmixed feeling of (so to speak) the most limpid kind, not to be found in the troubled waters of his contemporary. In powers of poetical criticism there was no comparison between them. Coleridge's review of Wordsworth, in his *Biographia Literaria*, contains the finest lecture on the art of poetry in the language.

gotten ; but who that knows does not quote lines from his "Farewell to Tobacco" ; his "walking, gowned" in fancy, while visiting Cambridge ; his bidding the reeds of Camus be still, while he propounded themes that might puzzle Aristotle ; and his life-long India-house denunciations of

"The dry drudgery of the desk's dead wood" ?

I avoid speaking of the living. I have not done so in my time ; and I can still speak of them now and then in cases where only a single writer is to be considered apart from others. I cannot help seizing at this moment the opportunity that seems afforded me by the circumstance of her being the only poetess living, to indulge myself in an exception of this kind with regard to Mrs. Browning, and expressing my admiration, indeed wonder, at the marvellous beauty, dignity, delicacy, richness, the entire worthiness and loveliness of her sonnets, particularly those professing to be from the Portuguese. It is little to say of a woman of such genius, that, for anything which survives to show the contrary, she is the greatest poetess that ever existed. She is great, whether among poetesses or poets ; and the greatest might have claimed her for a sister.

But when many writers of either sex are brought together in a book like this, comparisons are excited as to the "greater or less" amount of claims to distinction ; and—to say nothing of other delicate points—the most generous of them might be hurt by what might seem to be the drawing to them of invidious attention. Circumstances have so conspired to perplex me in this portion of my work, that I am not sure of having selected, or even of having been able to procure, the best specimens

of some of the writers, or the very names and books of others, who have arisen in these poetical times, and whose rays are appearing above the horizon. But, as the old gentleman said when he was going to get on horseback before some ladies, my readers must count "seventy-two" before they think I could have been more active in the getting up of this book.

I had scarcely entered upon my task from the very first, when the difficulty of making the selection at all forced me on adopting a plan of restriction which, if it has often severely tried the indulgence of my own pleasure, has not only facilitated my work otherwise, but will have given the book perhaps some increase of interest, and even, for the kind of work, some portion of novelty. Of sonnets known to all the sonnet-reading world, I have omitted, I hope, none of such "exquisitest name" as they had a right to look for ; but with regard to the rest, I have confined myself as much as possible to such as took a peculiar coloring from the lives and idiosyncrasies of the writers, and thus added personal to poetical interest. I have made but two exceptions to this rule, whenever I could follow it. I have admitted nothing licentious, — which is the excess of the animal nature, — and nothing superstitious, — which is the disease and desecration of the spiritual.

It should be added, that no conclusions for or against the merits of the different writers are to be drawn from the greater or less number of the sonnets extracted ; the total amounts of them in their authors' pages varying extremely, from a small number to a great. Nor have I always been able to ascertain how many were written, in consequence of finding some of them in selections only.

And if I might now conclude this essay with a word of advice, which I venture to think the best possible to be given to cultivators of the Sonnet, or indeed of any kind of writing whatsoever, I would say, let a sense of the honest likings and dispositions most peculiar to themselves, whatever they may be, predominate above every other consideration in the choice of subjects *to write upon*. What we know best, we can relate best. What is truest within us, we can best utter. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." "To be, and not to seem," is as admirable a principle for writing as for everything else. Let nobody — apart from just respect for his character — consider what would make his powers, or his inclinations, appear best in the eyes of the world. Let him think of nothing but what he can best do, — what he is fittest to do by habit and information; what he is most inclined to do for its own sake; what he feels it to be most incumbent upon him to do for conscience's sake, or for common truth's sake, or for common sense's. If he is an eagle, let him soar. If he is only a dove, what good will the attempt to soar do him? but how beautifully may he not circle the homestead. If he is a sea-bird, let him go out to sea; if a nightingale, keep to the covert; if a mocking-bird, sing of what he pleases; but then the name must be true in part only, as it is in the case of the bird, to which it does injustice: he must not only have "mockery" in him, not only the power to resemble others, but a song, in addition, of his own. If writers of verses in general were not too much addicted to hackneyed subjects, particularly those upon which they seem riding on the "high horse," the world would have many more poets than it possesses, and a great many more

charming productions. Why do not a greater number of people write? and why do not writers oftener speak "according to knowledge," whether gravely or gayly? The "shop" has been too much cried down. The fault of the poem called "The Shipwreck" is, not that it is too nautical, but too little so. I do not mean in a technical sense; for much technicality is at no time desirable; but in the homely, natural, and hearty sense; the sense that has given so much popularity to the prose writings of Smollett, Cooper, and others, and the sea-songs of Dibdin. Garth, the author of "The Dispensary," who was a physician as well as a wit, did not disdain to avail himself of his professional knowledge for the purpose of writing that satire on behalf of a charity; and much the more effective for the knowledge it was. Warton's sonnet upon his favorite pursuit, literary antiquities, was the best he wrote, and everybody admires it; but who cares for his laureate odes, or for his "Pleasures of Melancholy"? What a pity that Michel Angelo did not write artistical, instead of philosophical sonnets; and that Corelli, Scarlatti, and others, who were members of the rhyming Arcadian Society, did not tell us something, in verse, of their exquisite musical perceptions! All persons who are able to do it should give us the pleasure, in like manner, of seeing what they can best do, and what most heartily enjoy.

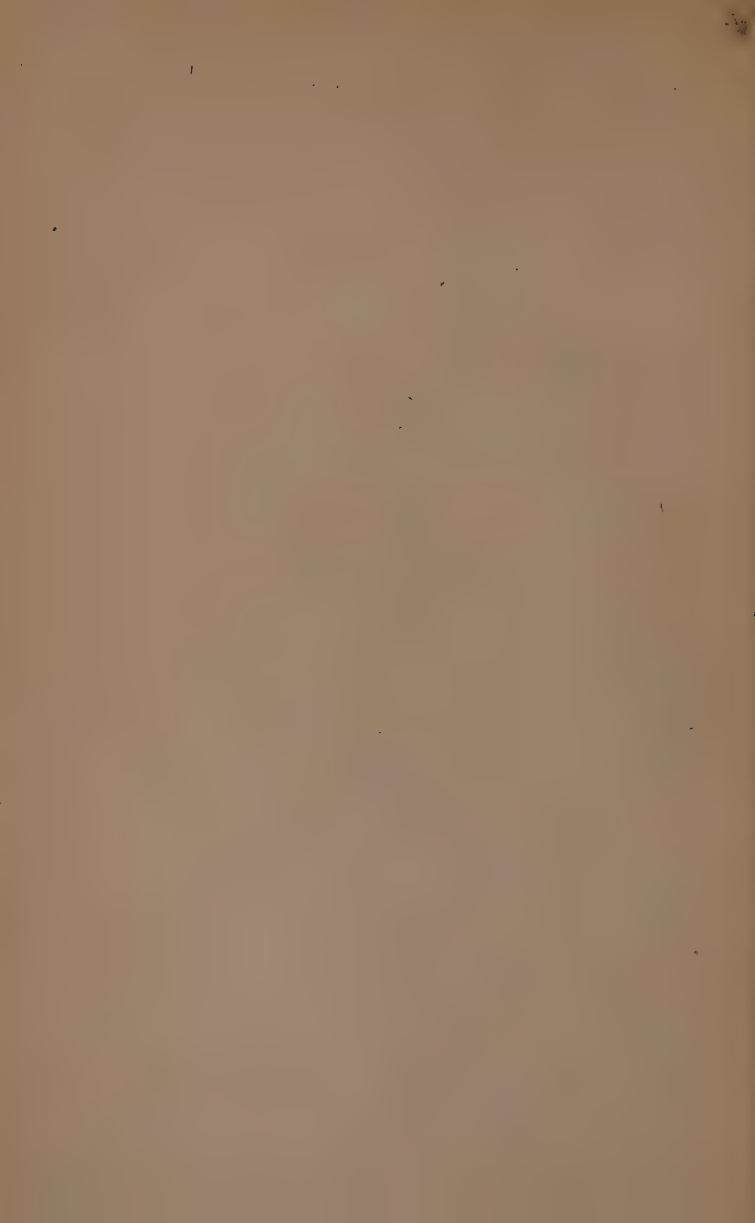
L. H.





AMERICAN
SONNETS AND SONNETEERS.







AMERICAN SONNETS AND SONNETEERS.

TURNING from the Italian and English sonnet-writers and their productions to the poets of America who have contributed something to the same department of verse, we feel as though we were about to pass out of a region of the most abundant and delicate bloom into a field comparatively barren and uninviting.

The same causes which have hitherto prevented the appearance in this country of any truly great poem — a poem like the masterpieces of English imagination, expressing the culture, the knowledge, the matured genius of a great nation — have operated to prevent also the cultivation of the legitimate sonnet. For the requisitions of the drama, nay, even of the epic itself, are not proportionably greater — as I think the former part of this work has proved — than the requisitions of this “little poem of fourteen lines.” A perfect sonnet cannot often be dashed off “at a heat,” but demanding the nicest polish, and considerable patience in its composition, the majority of our poets, influenced by the eager, restless

spirit of their age, neglect it altogether, to embody their conceptions in more obvious and popular forms.

Unwilling to trust to the remote awards of posterity, tinged with the materialism, and sharing the intense unrest of his people, the American poet has seldom, like Coleridge, looked upon his art as "its own exceeding great reward," nor has he been content to live and work as a poet only. Even where no constraining necessity exists, we find him in the ranks of some practical profession, devoting, in all probability, the best portion of his energies to labors which unfit him for the pursuit of the highest purposes of his art.

It is not thus with the painter and sculptor : why should it be with the poet ? If he be poor, — and alas ! genius and poverty, married ages ago, seem, notwithstanding their conjugal incompatibility to have no chance of a divorce, — the reason is plain enough ; but what if he be rich, or possessed of a competence ? Would it not be wiser in one thus circumstanced, feeling the "divine impulsion" within him, to labor serenely and with singleness of aim in his vocation, disregarding the transient fashions of his time, and slowly building up unto perfection poems with the pith of immortality in them.

Had this been done, we might not now have been destitute of THE great American poem, whatever its metrical form, concerning which so many prophecies have been ventured upon, and so much premature enthusiasm expended.

At all events, our literature would have been richer in poetry of a much higher stamp than that which at present distinguishes it. I feel assured that the Sonnet especially would have been amply and beautifully represented ;

that anybody undertaking the task which now employs me, instead of experiencing a sentiment akin to mortification, as he compares the sonnets by his countrymen — not few in numbers, but careless in structure, and often commonplace in thought and design — with the masterly performances of this kind which adorn the literature of England and the Continent, would, on the contrary, have had every reason to be proud of the national achievements in an admirable and unique branch of art.

As it is, the American poet, under the conditions implied, circumscribed in his efforts, and democratic in his principles, has been satisfied with the production of verses which, for the most part, are easily written and quite as easily read. He addresses the masses, not a select circle of scholars, — the audience coveted by Milton, “fit, though few.” The complex in thought and rhythm he has had apparently neither the leisure nor the inclination to cultivate. True, since the advent of Edgar A. Poe, whose influence on the poetry of the country was marked and peculiar, a taste for labored eccentricities of metrical mechanism has repeatedly displayed itself; but it has been confined to a host of imitators, — the poetasters of gazettes and magazines.

The architectural eccentricities of Poe’s system of versification it was not difficult to copy; and we have, in consequence, during the last decade, been tormented by legions of illegitimate “Ravens,” and been invited to enter so prodigious a number of “Haunted Palaces,” that they may really be said to compose a municipality of their own, governed by a genius of grotesque *diablerie*.

Perhaps a better mode could not be found of bringing certain classes of the literary public to a clear perception

of what is the true and beautiful in poetic art, than by calling them to the candid study of such sonnets as those of Wordsworth in English, and of George H. Boker in American literature.

While the ear, if moderately correct, would be charmed by their rhythmical harmony, the pleasure derived from them, instead of evaporating in a sensuous delight, would be intensified by the communication of those "grave thoughts, great thoughts," which are seldom more striking and effective than when delivered through the medium of a sonnet worthy the name.

My business, however, is not to regret that the legitimate sonnet has been neglected amongst us, nor yet to suggest a remedy for depraved literary taste, but to give as detailed a narrative of the earliest appearance and of the progress of the sonnet in America as my scanty materials will allow.

The first American sonnet was written — at what precise date I have no means of ascertaining — by David Humphreys, LL. D., who was born at Denby, Connecticut, in 1753. He ranks among our Revolutionary heroes, and was educated at Yale College, with Barlow, Dwight, Trumbull, and others of historical fame.

Griswold, in the "Poets and Poetry of America," informs us that, soon after being graduated, in 1771, he joined the army under General Parsons, with the rank of captain. He was for several years attached to the staff of Putnam, and in 1780 was appointed aid to General Washington. He continued in the military family of the Commander-in-Chief until the close of the war, when he went abroad with Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson, as one of the commissioners appointed to negotiate treaties of commerce with foreign powers.

On his return to the United States, in 1786, he renewed his intimacy with his old friends, the authors of the "Columbiad" and "McFingal," and with Dr. Samuel Hopkins, with whom he engaged in writing the "Anarchiad," a political satire, in imitation of the "Rolliad," a work attributed to Sheridan and others, which he had seen in London.

Colonel Humphreys subsequently filled many military and diplomatic offices. He died at New Haven, in February, 1818, at the age of sixty-five.

An interest attaches to the first known sonnet produced by an American author, as well as to the author himself, entirely independent of the artistic merits of the one, or the amount of poetical genius possessed by the other. Colonel Humphreys's sonnet, however, on the subject of "The Soul," is by no means a contemptible performance. It shows the writer to have been a clever versifier, and a correct thinker. Its conclusion, particularly, is stately and sonorous. One other sonnet by him has come down to us, in the form of an address to the Prince of Brazil, whose acquaintance Colonel Humphreys made during his residence as Minister in Lisbon. It bears the date of July, 1797, and is a manly, unaffected effusion, expressed in scholarly terms, and with some musical and rhythmic facility.*

* The principal poems of Colonel Humphreys are "An Address to the Armies of the United States," written in 1772; a poem on "The Happiness of America," written during his residence in London and Paris; "The Widow of Malabar, or the Tyranny of Custom"; and lastly, a "Poem on Agriculture." His "Miscellaneous Works" were published (in octavo) in New York City, first in 1790, and again in 1808. As regards his style, "he seems to have aimed only at an elegant mediocrity, and his pieces are generally simple and correct in thought and language." (Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America.")

The next American sonnets, in the order of time, are those by Richard B. Davies, a native of New York, who died when quite a young man, in 1799 ; and those by Robert Treat Paine, a poetaster, famous in his generation, whose verses have long since deservedly sunk into oblivion. His sonnets, like everything else he wrote, are formal and lifeless, though ambitious. No feeling more intense than vanity seems to have inspired them, and in execution they lack both taste and imaginative force. I have reproduced them, together with the sonnets of Paine's immediate predecessor, Davies, as literary curiosities only.

From the period at which we have now arrived to the rise of those generally considered the fathers of our poetic literature, namely, Allston, Dana, Bryant, Longfellow, etc., I have been unable to find, after consulting all the sources at my command, a single sonnet, good, bad, or indifferent.* It is therefore with the sonnets

* Since the above was written, I have accidentally discovered in the columns of the old Charleston "City Gazette and Daily Advertiser," for Wednesday, February 14, 1798, an original sonnet, signed W. R., and no doubt intended as a valentine. It reads thus :—

- " They tell me that in opening life the hue
Of rosy health bloomed on my glowing cheek ;
That my full eye sparkled with liquid blue,
And seemed with strong intelligence to speak :
- " They tell me too, that in luxuriance wild
Waved my dark locks ; perchance they tell me truth,
For 't is an adage that the loveliest child
Makes in advancing age the sorrier youth.
- " So has it been with me ; — in vain I seek
To trace the roseate hue of healthful red ;
Dull is my eye, and colorless my cheek,
And gone the flowing honors of my head ;
- " But still remains unchanged my better part,
Still true to love and Laura is my heart ! "

of Washington Allston that our critical task properly begins.

One would have supposed that a man of Allston's delicate and true feeling for beauty, his fine yet vigorous imagination, and the opportunities he enjoyed of studying Italian poetry among the scenes and associations that gave it birth and passionate life, would naturally have shown some partiality for the sonnet in its highest, most artistic forms. When, however, we examine the few sonnets he has left us, we are disappointed, not merely in the paucity of their numbers, but in their want of constructive care.

The thought is always appropriate, often suggestive, occasionally full of the insight and force of imagination characteristic of the writer in his happiest moods ; but the same sort of dissatisfaction which Mr. Hunt expresses while reverting to the sonnets of Milton is apt to be felt, I think, after an impartial perusal of those by Allston. He could have done so much better, had he willed it. His genius, endowed with the constructive faculty, might have found herein one of its fittest modes of strictly poetical expression ; and, indeed, after very just deduction from the merits of his sonnets, as they now remain, they are perhaps the best specimens of his poetic works.

The sonnets by William Cullen Bryant are only four in number. Of these, the subjects have been drawn chiefly from impressive aspects of the natural world, associated with the moral ideas and feelings of which such aspects are suggestive. They are delicate and beautiful productions ; belonging, it is true, to the illegitimate school, yet so thoroughly possessed by "the laconic soul of the sonnet" that none but a hypercritical reader would

pause to note the defect of form. Nevertheless, turning hypercritical ourselves for the moment, we venture to hint how much all Bryant's sonnets would have gained in melody, if the concluding terzettos had not invariably been burdened by a couplet. The effect of such a close, even in sonnets in other respects perfect, is to give an incongruous tone to the versification, very much resembling the discord that would follow upon the introduction of a deep bass note at the end of a lyric that should be sung throughout in tenor. As for the sentiment, the fancy, the genuine philosophical perception of Bryant's sonnets, they could hardly be overrated.

In a somewhat different strain are the sonnets of Longfellow. As might have been anticipated from the peculiar genius and culture of the poet, they have generally adapted themselves to the legitimate model, and are, moreover, admirable specimens of a rare descriptive power and picturesque imagination. The too frequent desire to illustrate by material images and comparisons what is abstract in thought and emotion—as when, for example, the “stern thoughts and awful” of the Florentine are likened to “Farinata rising from his fiery tomb”—constitutes, perhaps, the only reasonable objection that can be brought as an offset to their unquestionable grace, purity, and “purple richness” of diction. For gorgeousness of color and language “The Evening Star” is remarkable.

“THE EVENING STAR.

“Lo ! in the painted oriel of the West,
Whose panes the sunken sun incarnadines,
Like a fair lady at her casement shines
The evening star, — the star of love and rest !

And then anon, she doth herself divest
Of all her radiant garments, and reclines
Behind the sombre screen of yonder pines,
With slumber and soft dreams of love oppressed :
O my beloved ! my sweet Hesperus !
My morning and my evening star of love !
My best and gentlest lady ! even thus,
As that fair planet in the sky above,
Dost thou retire unto thy rest at night,
And from thy darkened window fades the light."

In the last edition of Percival's Poems there are many sonnets of merit. It surprised me to remark the general finish and grace of their execution ; for the author's impulsive fancy, ready command of language, and, I may add, false principles of art, have caused him in the majority of his works to err on the score of diffuseness, and a careless ease of manner and expression. He says himself, in one of his prefaces, that his "verse is very far from bearing the marks of the file and burnisher"; and that he likes "to see poetry in the full ebullition of feeling and fancy, foaming up with the spirit of life, and glowing with the rainbows of a glad inspiration."

Believing thus in original genius, unrestrained and unmodified by the moulding powers of art, it is not astonishing that Percival should have left so little poetry — considering of course the quantity of verse he has published — that is likely long to survive him.

His sonnets are beautiful productions. Illegitimate in form, they yet show a true conception of what the sonnet ought to be, in tone, general structure, and character of melody. In several cases the poet has invented a form of his own, by a novel and a not ineffective disposition of rhymes, as, for example, in the following :—

"O, there are moments when the dreaming soul
 Forgets the earth, and wanders far away
 Into some region of eternal day,
 Where the bright waves in calm and sunshine roll !

"Thither it wanders, and has reached a goal ; —
 The good, the great, the beautiful, are there,
 And wreaths of victory crown their flowing hair ;
 And as they move, such music fills the air
 As ne'er from fabled bower or cavern stole.

"Soft to the heart it winds, and hushes deep
 Its cares and sorrows. Thought then, fancy-free,
 Flies on from bliss to bliss, till, finding thee,
 It pauses, as the musk-rose charms the bee,
 Tranced as in happy dream of magic sleep."

The finest of Percival's sonnets are the purely descriptive. To him the glories of Nature never appealed in vain. They were

"His inspiration and his deep delight."

When fully possessed by his theme, this poet, like Wordsworth, and some of the earlier English sonneteers, employs the sonnet as a stanza, as in the admirable poem beginning,

"I stand upon the mountains 'mid a sea" ;

and also the series of six sonnets on the subject of his love, which form a connected composition of exquisite tenderness and feeling. Regarded by itself, the sonnet with which this performance opens is the most perfect in every respect of Percival's minor poems. In the delicate elaborateness of its structure, moulded upon the strictest Petrarchian model, in its melodious rhythmical flow, and subtle earnestness of passion, it is alone a sufficient answer to those who maintain that the English

Sonnet is adapted solely to topics of a sublime and tragic, or, at all events, of a wholly solemn nature. I quote it entire, and beg the reader to note how successful the author has been in the rather dangerous experiment of changing his rhymes to dissyllables in the *terzetto*s.

“If on the clustering curls of thy dark hair,
And the pure arching of thy polished brow,
We only gaze, we fondly dream that thou
Art one of those bright ministers who bear,
Along the cloudless bosom of the air,
Sweet, solemn words, to which our spirits bow, —
With such a holy smile thou lookest now,
And art so soft and delicately fair.
A veil of tender light is mantling o’er thee ;
Around thy opening lips young loves are playing,
And crowds of youths, in passionate thought delaying,
Pause, as thou movest by them, to adore thee ;
By many a sudden blush and tear betraying
How the heart trembles when it bends before thee !”

Percival was not merely a poet. He was an accomplished linguist and *savant*. His special scientific attainments procured for him the office of State Geologist of Connecticut. It was probably when he first determined to devote his time and labor to geological researches that the following sonnet was written :—

“Now to my task ! — be firm, — the work requires
Cool reason, deep reflection ; — and the glow
Of heart that pours itself in restless flow
Must sleep, and fancy quench her beaming fires,
And all my longings, hopes, and wild desires
Must seek their slumberous pillow, and be still ;
But energy must mantle o’er my will,
And give the patient toil that never tires ;
For Nature stands before me, and invites

My spirit to her sanctuary, and draws
Aside her pictured veil from where she writes
In living letters her eternal laws ;
And as I stand amid the countless wheels
That roll the car of being on its way,
A deep serene my silent bosom feels,
I seem a portion of the viewless ray,
And o'er me flows the light of pure, unfading day."

The writings of Halleck and Richard Henry Dana are destitute of sonnets. So far as Mr. Dana is concerned, we regret the fact, because we think him endowed with those peculiar qualities of intellect and heart which enter into the composition of all the higher order of sonneteers. The union in his nature of the elements of idealism and deep thoughtfulness of character, resulting in a chastened intellectual and moral power, is precisely that union of forces which finds a fitting manifestation and embodiment in the sonnets of Wordsworth, and other poets whose mental structure resembles his.

I have thought it right to bestow thus much consideration upon our elder and best known poets, although none of them—not even Percival—are to be looked upon as professed sonneteers.

I now come to a late period of our literature, which, fortunately for us, exhibits some specimens of the sonnet that would do no discredit to the art, taste, and genius of the classic writers of Italy and Great Britain.

Abandoning anything like an attempt at chronological order, I shall in the first place introduce to the reader those—very few in number—who have earned the right to be called Legitimate Sonneteers ; and, secondly, those—not so few in number—who have practised, with more

or less success, the diverse forms of the illegitimate sonnet.

Among the former class, George H. Boker, of Philadelphia, better known as a dramatist of great merit,* deserves in my judgment the most prominent position. His sonnets (seventy-eight of which appear in the second volume of his "Plays and Poems," published by Messrs. Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1856) are, with hardly an exception, composed in accordance with the established Italian rule. Wordsworth himself was not more scrupulous in following the classical standards.

But Mr. Boker has not pursued a conventional system of versification from any blind reverence for authority, but because of the evident sincerity of his faith in the variety, flexibility, and beauty of the English tongue. With those, indeed, who are accustomed only to the more prominent rhymes, and the more marked forms of verse, the melody of these sonnets may often fall as on a dull ear. But to a cultivated taste, and to the secret sense of hearing, apt for the music of poetry, we would cheerfully commit almost any one of Mr. Boker's sonnets, without an apprehension that the sweetness and variety of its harmony would pass unheeded. He has vindicated the

* Mr. Boker has achieved signal success in both departments of the drama. His comedies are easy and sparkling, but it is in the more difficult walk of the Tragic Muse that his strength is best displayed. "Francesca da Rimini" and "Léonor de Guzman" are magnificent efforts, — far better, we think, than any other tragedies of modern times. In them the author shows his profound knowledge of the human heart, with its sentiments and passions, its love, rage, jealousy, ambition, despair. In them, too, he charms us with the beauty and harmony of poetic diction, or rouses us with eloquence of the highest order.

justness of his views, by the production of sonnets as perfect in structure as they are instinct with thought and beauty.

Mr. Boker's sonnets may be divided into three general classes : first, the political sonnets, or those which treat of topics nationally important ; second, the philosophical ; and third, the love-sonnets. There are also sonnets of a miscellaneous kind.

Of the political sonnets, it may be fairly said, that they are full of a vigorous spirit, hardihood, and energy. Never overstepping the modesty of Nature, and always with "a reserve of power in their passionate expression," they appeal to the enthusiasm that is latent in all healthful blood, quickening the pulse, enlivening the brain, and imparting the heat of a fine lyrical fire to every impulsive or susceptible nature. "What!" the poet exclaims, referring doubtless to some period in our history when the fear prevailed of a European invasion, —

"What ! cringe to Europe ! Band it all in one,
 Stilt its decrepit strength, renew its age,
 Wipe out its debts, contract a loan to wage
 Its venal battles, — and by yon bright sun,
 Our God is false, and Liberty undone,
 If slaves have power to win your heritage !
 Look on your country ! God's appointed stage,
 Where man's vast mind its boundless race shall run.
 For that it was your stormy coast He spread, —
 A fear in winter, — girded you about
 With granite hills, and made you strong and dread.
*Let him who fears before the foemen shout,
 Or gives an inch before a vein has bled,
 Turn on himself, and let the traitor out !*"

What an honest ring and strength of indignation in these last three lines ! The scorn seems to be a vital

thing, smiting like a blow in the face the cowards whose supposed treachery has roused the poet's anger! The subject is continued thus :—

“ What though the cities blaze, the ports be sealed,
 The fields untilled, the hand of labor still,
 Ay, every arm of commerce and of skill
 Palsied and broken ; shall we therefore yield,
 Break up the sword, put by the dintless shield ?
 Have we no home upon the wooded hill,
 That mocks a siege ? No patriot ranks to drill ?
 No nobler labor in the battle-field ?
 Or grant us beaten. While we gather might,
 Is there no comfort in the solemn wood ?
No cataracts whose angry roar shall smite
Our hearts with courage ? No eternal brood
Of thoughts begotten by the eagle's flight ?
No God to strengthen us in solitude ? ”

The italicized parts of this sonnet are assuredly very striking, breathing as they do the noblest spirit of resistance to invasion, and drawing significant incentives for unyielding action from “ the angry roar of the cataract,” and the “ eternal thoughts ” begotten by the flight of eagles.

None of Mr. Boker's sonnets, whatever the subject, are without a firm “ body of thought.” Having mastered his idea, he clothes it with language “ simple, sensuous, passionate,” developing its cognate relations with a clear, logical sequence, an admirable appropriateness of illustration, which give to his poems in this form the charm of great natural force, directness, and lucidity.

From his philosophical sonnets we have only space to quote the ensuing, directed against that “ hollow fraud ” of consolation which professes to extract from *all* grief some precious healing balm :—

"Dear is the fruit of sorrow, priceless store
 Comes from the hand of grief, as sages tell ;
 Seeking for comfort in the woes that swell
 Our hearts to bursting ; with fore-gathered lore
 Lulling the fears that make a gloom before
 Our onward tread. Ah, hollow fraud ! As well
 Speak truth, and say, — ' We healed mishaps that fell
 By their own issue, as with running gore
 A wound is healed ' ; but lo ! the lasting scar !
 We make the best of man's dark destiny
 By self-deceit, while hopes and pleasures flee
 Before our vision ; till the latest star
 Fades in the dawn of knowledge, and we see
 Earth, like a joyless desert, stretch afar."

Whatever merits — and I have said they are many
 and peculiar — Mr. Boker's sonnets may possess, I am
 disposed to rank his love-sonnets first. Though each is
 a perfect lyric in itself, they form altogether an elaborate
 poem, connected by the one bright thread of passionate
 and tender associations. The author has infused into
 them the aroma of the sonneteers of the fifteenth and
 sixteenth centuries, —

" The spacious times of great Elizabeth."

The quaintness bordering on conceit, but never degener-
 ating into affectation ; the air of devoted self-abnegation
 and abstraction, half sensuous, half metaphysical ; the
 terse verbal felicities, — all serve to remind us of Wyatt,
 Sidney, and Spenser. Steeped in the flush and spring-
 time of youth, these sonnets suggest the " hey-day " of
 the blood, that delicious season when, according to
 Charles Lamb, ' true love thinks no labor to send out
 thoughts upon the vast, and more than Indian voyages, to
 bring home rich pearls, outlandish wealth, gems, jewels,

and spicery, to sacrifice in self-depreciatory similitudes, as shadows of true amiabilities, to the Beloved." They are full of the tender gallantry of the old cavalier lyrists, — a gallantry the result of chivalric sentiment, touched by a certain grace of euphuism, which in its very exaggeration we feel to be possessed by the noblest elements of courtly sincerity.

It is impossible to read such sonnets without marvelling at the manner in which their author has identified himself in spirit with the great models he has chosen. For example, might not the following sonnet be mistaken — so far as the cast of thought and the nature of the imagery are concerned — for an amatory sonnet by Spenser, nay, by Spenser's master?

" Either the sum of this sweet mutiny
 Amongst thy features argues me some harm,
 Or else they practise wicked treachery
 Against themselves, thy heart, and hapless me.
 For as I start aside with blank alarm,
 Dreading the glitter which begins to arm
 Thy clouded brows, lo ! from thy lips I see
 A smile come stealing, like a loaded bee,
 Heavy with sweets and perfumes, all ablaze
 With soft reflections from the flowery wall
 Whereon it pauses. Yet I will not raise
 One question more, let smile or frown befall,
 Taxing thy love where I should only praise,
 And asking changes, that might change thee all."

Still more striking an instance is at hand : —

" *I 'll call thy frown a headsman, passing grim,*
 Walking before some wretch foredoomed to death,
 Who counts the pantings of his own hard breath ;
 Wondering how heart can beat, or steadfast limb
 Bear its sad burden to life's awful brim.

I 'll call thy smile a priest, who slowly saith
 Soft words of comfort as the sinner strayeth
 Away in thought, or sings a holy hymn,
 Full of rich promise, as he walks behind
 The fatal axe with face of goodly cheer,
 And kind inclinings of his saintly ear.
 So, love, thou seest, in smiles or looks unkind,
 Some taste of sweet philosophy I find,
 That seasons all things in our little sphere."

The fantastic, but ingenious similes which render this sonnet a curiosity in its way, derive their parentage from the poetical vocabulary of Sidney and Shakespeare. Indeed, the more minutely we examine this portion of Mr. Boker's writings, the stronger does the proof become of the enthusiasm with which he has thrown himself into the study of Elizabethan literature. It is refreshing to meet at this time, and in America too, with an author so vigorous, natural, and *English*. The solid richness of Mr. Boker's imagination, his discreet judgment, large command of expression, and manly sensibility to what is beautiful and true in the nature *without*, and the passionate heart *within* us, are nowhere exemplified to so great an extent as in his sonnets.

Of the beauties of thought and diction scattered all over them, let me collect and comment upon a few. The possible decay of love is thus described :—

"Thou dost confess my love will ever be,
 And only fear its strength may waste away,
 Dropping its blossoms as the seasons flee,
 Or, like the evening of a boreal day,
 In lingering twilight stretch its sullen ray,
 And on the edge of night hang doubtfully."

There is something very impressive in this comparison of waning love to the "evening of a boreal day,"—

"That on the edge of night hangs doubtfully."

All its associations are in keeping with the nature of the "fear" it typifies, — desolation, loneliness, intolerable cold, and solitude made the more awful by the mockery of light. Thus it is that the poet, the interpreter of life's mystery and passion, by a single suggestive image or simile, defines the most complex conditions of feeling, or reveals to their depths the emotional phenomena of the soul !

In a description of opening Spring, we have some lines which partake of the animated picturesqueness of Chaucer : —

"Lo ! Winter sweeps away
His snowy skirts, and leaves the landscape gay
With early verdure ; and there's merry cheer
Among the violets, where the sun lies clear
On the south hillsides."

Of the affectation of a backward and somewhat cold mistress, whose "vague words and shy looks never touch the heart," it is said : —

"Alas ! alas ! that reason only proves
A fact your cautious action never tells,
That I must reach my joy by slow removes,
And guess at love as at the oracles !"

We must here take leave of Mr. Boker, satisfied that enough has been said and quoted to justify the high estimation we have placed upon his sonnets ; but equally satisfied that their merits can only be appreciated to the full by the reader after a close study of the poems themselves.

The sonnets of James Russell Lowell are chiefly, like the foregoing, legitimate ; but they cannot, like them, be divided into particular classes, because of their miscella-

neous character. They treat a variety of subjects, and are distinguished for subtle thoughtfulness, sensibility, and a delicate grace of imagination. The love-sonnets, of which he has written a few, contrast remarkably with those by Mr. Boker ; for they celebrate an *assured* affection, an affection placed above the throes of doubt, jealousy, passion, and are exquisitely earnest and confiding. Although of a subjective tendency — as such poems *must* be — they have the merits of an enlarged suggestiveness and reflection, whereby the special love of the individual is made significant of love itself ; and a moral of universal force and value is elicited from a personal experience.

Here is the last of a trio of sonnets, which partially illustrates what we mean : —

“ I would not have this perfect love of ours
 Grow from a single root, a single stem,
 Bearing no goodly fruit, but only flowers
 That idly hide life's iron diadem :
 It should grow alway, like that Eastern tree
 Whose limbs take root, and spread forth constantly ;
That love for one, from which there doth not spring
Wide love for all, is but a worthless thing.
 Not in another world, as poets prate,
 Dwell we apart above the tide of things,
 High floating o'er earth's clouds on faery wings ;
 But our pure love doth ever elevate
 Into a holy band of brotherhood
 All earthly things, making them pure and good.” *

The real secret of cynicism, the reason why so many

* This is one of the few *illegitimate* sonnets contained in Mr. Lowell's works. I quote it in consideration of its present appropriateness.

of us exclaim against human nature as wholly evil and ignoble, is well set forth in the sonnet beginning, —

“For this true nobleness I seek in vain !”

The cynic is counselled to “look *inward*,” — to look into the depths of his own soul.

“How is it with thee ? art thou sound and whole ?
Doth narrow search show thee no earthly stain ?
BE NOBLE ! *and the nobleness that lies*
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own :
Then wilt thou see it gleam in many eyes,
Then will pure light around thy path be shed,
And thou wilt nevermore be sad and lone.”

Mr. Lowell's sonnet to “The Spirit of Keats” I must indulge myself and the reader in quoting entire : —

“Great soul ! thou sittest with me in my room,
Uplifting me with thy vast, quiet eyes,
On whose full orbs with kindly lustre lies
The twilight warmth of ruddy ember-gloom :
Thy clear strong tones will oft bring sudden bloom
Of hope secure, to him who lonely cries,
Wrestling with the young poet's agonies,
Neglect and scorn which seem a certain doom :
Yes ! the few words *which, like great thunder-drops,*
Thy large heart down to earth shook doubtfully,
Thrilled by the inward lightning of its might,
Serene and pure like gushing joy of light,
Shall track the eternal chords of destiny
After the moon-led pulse of ocean stops.”

Not only grand as a sonnet, but truthful as a criticism ! The electric suggestiveness of which poetry is capable is admirably shown in the first *terzetto*, and it is worth pages of tame prose disquisition. Almost every phrase is typical, comprising a picture of not merely some pecu-

liar trait of Keats's character and genius, but by its emphatic appropriateness bringing vividly to sight the whole man, as man and as artist. The prominent features of Lowell's sonnets may be briefly summed up, as extreme sensibility to moral and spiritual beauty ; imagination, not so bright in its coloring, as clear, defined, harmonious in its outlines ; insight, metaphysically acute ; and, finally, in their mechanical construction, a degree of care and scholarly finish, which we often fail to perceive in his other and longer poems.

Of the American writers of the *illegitimate* sonnet, in its countless multiplicity of forms, I do not think it necessary to speak at length. Their number, as intimated, is considerable ; but their productions exhibit, on the whole, so little saliency, that I shrink from the task of individually criticising, or attempting to criticise them, that is to say elaborately.* It is, however, essential to my plan that something should be said, in a cursory way, of the merits and demerits of these authors.

Mr. George Hill — a native, Mr. Griswold tells me, of Guilford on Long Island Sound, and an eminent graduate of Yale College — is, I believe, the eldest of them. The style of his poetry, as exemplified in his dramatic piece, called "Titania," and in a poem on the "Ruins of Athens," — in the Spenserean stanza, — justifies Griswold in terming it "severe" ; but Mr. Hill's sonnets are somewhat loosely composed ; and, moreover, they lack originality, both in the subjects selected and in the poet's mode of treating them.

* Our Female Sonneteers I have grouped together in the latter part of the work, not from discourtesy to them, but because the material needed for the preparation of that portion of my essay reached me last, and after my work was almost completed.

Mr. Jones Very, known as having formerly filled the post of Tutor in Greek in Harvard College, is responsible for a larger number of sonnets than any other writer of New England. Mr. Very is also the author of three essays, — on "Epic Poetry," "Shakespeare," and "Hamlet." They are "fine specimens of learned and sympathetic criticism." His sonnets appeared in a collection of his works in prose and verse, issued in 1839, and belong to the extreme conventional type of the illegitimate sonnet.

Mr. Very's tone is deeply devotional. No matter what his topic, he unconsciously imbues it with the religious sentiment. The old metaphysical rhapsodists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Donne, Herbert, Vaughn, &c., are evidently his poetical models. He has studied them with faithful attention, and has reproduced their style, more in its faults, however, than in its excellences. Donne, I take it, is his favorite. He could not, in many respects, have chosen a worse master. Mr. Very shows no real power of invention, and his "range of subjects," like his range of thought, is "limited." Nevertheless, in his highest moods, he is sincere, tender, fanciful; and the flow of his verse, though at one time monotonous, at another involved, is for the most part musical and pleasing. Nevertheless, his great fault, as a sonneteer, is a vague mysticism of reflection, encouraged by, if not absolutely derived from, his too familiar acquaintance with the poets we have mentioned. The sonnets which bear his name in this collection have been chosen because of their freedom from this characteristic obscurity.

Mr. Park Benjamin was the first American, so far as I

can learn, who employed the sonnet as a vehicle of humorous description.* A keen sense of the absurd and *bizarre* is displayed in the following :—

“To see a fellow of a summer’s morning,
 With a large fox-hound of a slumberous eye,
 And a slim gun, go slowly lounging by,
 About to give the feathered bipeds warning,
 That probably they may be shot hereafter,
 Excites in me a quiet kind of laughter ;
 For though I am no lover of the sport
 Of harmless murder, yet it is to me
 Almost the funniest thing on earth to see
 A corpulent person breathing with a snort,
 Go on a shooting frolic all alone ;
 For well I know that when he’s out of town,
 He, and his dog, and gun will all lie down,
 And undestructive sleep till game and light are flown !”

* Unless we consider the following, by Robert Treat Paine, as an attempt in the same style :—

“SONNET TO ELIZA.

“Ah ! do the Muses, once so coy and shy,
 Pursue Menander as hard as legs can lay ?
 By heavens ! Menander swears, he will not fly,
 But meet their gentle ladyships half-way.

“What ! shall this coward bard turn pale with fear ?
 When clinging round his knees these virgins lie,
 Is he afraid of drowning in a tear,
 Or being blown to atoms by a sigh ?

“No, dear Eliza, with expanded arms
 I turn to clasp the fair one that pursues ;
 But, struck with such divinity of charms,
 Shrink from alliance with so bright a muse.

“Yet weep not, that from Hymen’s yoke I’ve slipped my neck,
 For you’ve escaped a bite, while I have lost a spec.”

This is not, however, a characteristic sonnet. There are others among the few Mr. Benjamin has written which — beside being more nearly adapted to the right sonnet-form — are, in themselves, clever and thoughtful poems. Here is one of them, addressed simply to

“M. J.

“Born in the North, and reared in tropic lands ;
Her mind has all the vigor of a tree
Sprung from a rocky soil beside the sea,
And all the sweetness of a rose that stands
In the soft sunshine on some sheltered lea.
She seems all life, and light, and love to me !
No winter lingers in her glowing smile,
No coldness in her deep melodious words ;
But all the warmth of her dear Indian isle,
And all the music of its tuneful birds.
With her conversing of my native bowers
In the far South, I feel the genial air
Of some delicious morn, and taste those flowers,
Which like herself are bright above compare !”

The sonnet to “A Great Name” has just escaped fulfilling all the conditions necessary to a sonnet of the strictly legitimate type : —

“Time ! thou destroyest the relics of the Past !
And hidest all the footprints of thy march,
On sheltered column, and on crumbled arch,
By moss, and ivy growing green and fast :
Hurled into fragments by the tempest blast,
The Rhodian monster lies ; — the Obelisk
That with sharp line divided the broad disk
Of Egypt’s sun, down to the sands was cast ;
And where these stood, no remnant trophy stands,
And even the art is lost by which they rose ;
Thus with the monuments of other lands,
The place that knew them now no longer knows ; —
Yet triumph not, O Time ! strong towers decay,
But a great Name shall never pass away !”

The sonnets of William H. Burleigh "possess," as Leigh Hunt says of Shelley's "Ozymandias," "the right comprehensiveness," and I have doubted — their structure is in some cases so correct — whether they might not be fairly ranked among the legitimate sonnets. "The Brook," and "Solitude," both to be found among our selections, will justify this remark.

The most original and salient of the irregular sonnet-eers of the South is William Gilmore Simms, whose fertile genius has contributed so much to the vindication of the intellect and patriotism of his part of the country. His sonnets are numerous and of every variety of construction. Their chief merit resides in the character of the thought, which is seldom otherwise than strong, suggestive, and perspicuous. A rugged and impetuous power, and, where the topic admits of it, a passionate intensity of feeling, rising almost into vehemence, leave the author no time to consider the "proprieties of verse"; he rushes on with the energy of the improvisatore, so that frequently he constrains himself to make use of the sonnet as a stanza, the limit of fourteen lines appearing to be insufficient to the full exercise either of his imagination or his enthusiasm. Yet many of his sonnets are complete and "rounded," possessing a fine metrical balance, and leaving consequently little to desire in reference to their construction. The following is a good example : —

"Sudden the mighty nation goes not down ;
There is no mortal fleetness in its fate : —
Time, many omens, still anticipate
The peril that removes its iron crown
And shakes its homes with ruin. Centuries
Fleet by in the long struggle, and great men
Rush mounted to the break where victory lies,
And personal virtue brings us life again.

Were it not thus, my Country ! were this hope
Not ours, the present were a fearful time ;
Vainly we summon mighty hearts to cope
With thy oppressors, — vanity and crime.
These ride thee as upon some noble beast,
The scoundrel jackal hurrying to his feast.”

Mr. Simms in the choice of his subjects adheres mostly to the gravest themes. The solemn or fearful aspects of national events, the dark mysteries of human fate and experience, — demanding in their consideration the exercise of the metaphysical faculty, — these are the burden of his sonnets.

“The thing,” as Wordsworth expresses it, becomes “a trumpet in his hands,” — when he would awaken the dormant patriotism of his people ; or it serves him as the medium of philosophical inquiry in those regions of speculation which only imagination, sublimated by faith, should dare to enter.

In a word, the sonnets of this writer are valuable, not as matured art-products, but as stern embodiments of individual will and passion, no less than as specimens of genuine subtlety and reach of thought.

Henry T. Tuckerman is the author of about twenty-eight sonnets of a miscellaneous nature, written in the form of three quatrains, concluded by the usual heroic couplet. Griswold says that “Mr. Tuckerman’s sonnets display some of the most perfect examples, of that kind of writing that adorn American literature.” I cannot subscribe to this assertion, which proves how superficial Griswold’s knowledge of the sonnet, and its requirements, must have been ; nor do I believe that Mr. Tuckerman himself — whose candor as a critic equals his ability — will quarrel with me for denying it. Let us

admit, however, that his sonnets, if not worthy this degree of praise, are unquestionably graceful, polished, and pleasing compositions. Every line seems to have been carefully revised, and the ultimate effect is a Pope-like ease and flow of rhythm, and great propriety of diction, not without a special charm of their own. I call the reader's special attention to the sonnets entitled "To One Deceived," "Freedom," "Sleep," and "The Balcony," — all included in this work, and all confirming, I think, what has been said.

Mr. Epes Sargent, in his "Summer Voyage to Cuba," has employed a stanza of fourteen lines, the last line of which is invariably a rhymed Alexandrine, — which brings his stanzas technically under the head of the most irregular of quatorzens. Some of them are so picturesque that I have thought proper to extract them into our volume.

The younger poets of America, who have won distinction in other departments of their art, — I refer here particularly to Bayard Taylor, Aldrich, and Stoddard, — have published few sonnets, but those few are meritorious. I instance Taylor's manly and earnest dedication to George H. Boker, which introduces his "Poems of Home and Travel," — a sonnet not unworthy of Boker himself; also his sonnet to "Life," and "To the Mountains."

Since this essay was planned and almost executed, Mr. T. B. Aldrich has risen so rapidly into poetical fame, through the deserved honors bestowed upon him both in this country and in England, that I would call particular attention to such of his sonnets as I have quoted from his "Poems," published by Messrs. Ticknor and Fields in 1865. Hitherto Mr. Aldrich has been distinguished for the exquisite beauty of his lyrics, and the grand passages

to be found in his Scriptural poem of "Judith," rather than for any achievements in the peculiar and difficult branch of poetry of which I treat. I think, however, that a careful consideration of the sonnets hereafter quoted will convince the reader that Mr. Aldrich occupies no second rank amongst living sonneteers, and that the care and polish which he has bestowed upon his works give promise of a higher future excellence in this department. I refer to the sonnets entitled respectively "Egypt" and "Accomplices," as admirable specimens of Mr. Aldrich's powers. According to the strict rules laid down by the Italian writers, these sonnets are not constructed on the *legitimate* model, but they approach it so nearly in form, and are so far elevated above mere forms by the genius which embodies them, as to disarm extreme criticism, and content us with their own beauties. A further study and cultivation of the "Sonnet's scanty plot" will add not only to Mr. Aldrich's growing reputation, but to the literary wealth of America in a branch of refined poetical art in which she grievously needs representation.

The following to "T. B." — Bayard Taylor, I presume — is one of the best of the few sonnets which Richard Henry Stoddard, the American Keats, has as yet written : —

"TO T. B.

"Though Youth is fresh upon us, we are squires
Of Poesy, and swell her shining train,
With all the belted knights, whose prowess fires
Our hearts to do what noble deeds remain ;
The golden spurs are ours ere many days,
If we are true ; then let us join our hands,

And knit our souls in friendship's holy bands,
To help each other in the coming frays.
Envy and hate are for the low and mean ;
We will be noble rivals, oftentime
Crossing our spears in tournaments of rhyme,
In friendly tilts to glorify our queen ;
Friendly to all save caitiffs foul and wrong,
But stern to guard the holy land of song ! ”

I cannot but regret, more than in the case of any other American poet, that Stoddard has not cultivated the Sonnet to its utmost limits. There is that in his delicate touch, his rich yet subdued coloring, the conscientious labor which he bestows upon his details, and the general faithfulness and harmony of the entire handling of his subjects, which would have gained for him a foremost place among the sonnet-writers not only of our own country and of our own time, but among those of any country and of any time. Every one of his exquisite lyrics, every line of melodious blank-verse, establishes the justness of the regret, and awakens the hope that hereafter he may bend graceful genius into a form of poetry for which all his powers are so eminently fitted.

Amongst the poets of the South, Paul H. Hayne occupies a pre-eminent place, not only as a sonneteer, but as a writer of narrative and lyrical poetry. In the year 1860 Messrs. Ticknor and Fields, of Boston, published a volume of poems by Mr. Hayne, entitled “Avolio, a Legend of the Island of Cos, with Poems Lyrical, Miscellaneous, and Dramatic,” which contains about sixty specimens of his sonnets. They treat of the whole range of subjects to which the Sonnet can be properly applied. In the selection of his subjects Mr. Hayne exhibits the rare taste and judgment of the true sonneteer ; since there are

certain subjects, and certain subjects only, that naturally fall within the limits of this form of poetry. Mr. Hayne has studied faithfully the structure and capabilities of the Sonnet ; and the result, as shown in his writings, has been, that, although he has not chosen to adhere strictly to the Italian rules of composition, he has nowhere permitted the spirit of his great models to escape him. His sonnets are genuine sonnets in everything, except in the mere arbitrary disposition of the rhymes and the grammatical pauses. Considering the poverty of our language in rhymes, when compared with the Italian, an English sonneteer should perhaps not be held culpable in seeking to escape from their hard trammels at a sacrifice of form. Many examples may be shown where even the greatest of English poets have been obliged to wring their language until it winced, in order to preserve the due succession of rhymes so readily obtained by their Italian teachers. If this be a defect in Mr. Hayne's sonnets, it is greatly overbalanced by the display of all the other merits which he found in his prototypes. Simple, passionate, direct, neither overloaded with ornament nor without its graces, each one of his little poems stands before us as a complete work in itself, owing nothing to an epigrammatic turn of surprise, nor to the too ponderous weight of the last line. His political sonnets are filled with patriotic fire and martial vigor ; his philosophical sonnets are imbued with serene thoughtfulness and a far-reaching insight into the secrets of humanity ; his personal sonnets are touching with the tender self-denial of pure friendship, or vivid with the burning flame of a righteous scorn ; and his love sonnets are passionate with the instincts of youth, colored with the glow of

early imagination, and subdued by the delicate modesty of a chastened yet evident desire.

I call the reader's attention to these sonnets, with the assurance that he will find them amongst the best that have been written in America, and that a perusal of them will send him to Mr. Hayne's volume in eager search for more poetry of the same high quality.

In a volume of charming poetry, by Henry Timrod, which appeared about a year since from a Boston house, there are fourteen sonnets, which, for richness and grace of imagination, beauty of thought, and a warm, natural glow of sentiment and of passion, are not surpassed, I think, by the most perfect sonnets in this collection. Mr. Timrod has been long distinguished for his rare poetic gifts, and all the sonnets I have mentioned are nothing more than fair illustrations of them. Here is one of his sonnets on "Love," remarkable for subtle suggestiveness and harmonious diction : —

"Most men know love but as a part of life :
 They hide it in some corner of the breast,
 Even from themselves ; and only when they rest, —
 In the brief pauses of that daily strife
 Wherewith the world might else be not so rife, —
 They draw it forth (as one draws forth a toy
 To soothe some ardent, kiss-exacting boy),
 And hold it up to sister, child, or wife.
 Ah me ! why may not love and life be one !
 Why walk we thus alone, when by our side
 LOVE, like a visible God, might be our guide ?
*How would the marts grow noble, and the street,
 Worn now like dungeon-floors by weary feet,
 Seem like a golden court-way of the sun !*"

I have at length reached a delicate and difficult part of my subject, — for my next duty is to speak of the

Female Sonnet-writers of America. Some critics, when called upon to discuss the works of lady-authors, invariably assume a tone of half-bantering deference, or an air of sarcastic patronage, which any sensible woman must, and ought to resent. For my part, I have determined to show the respect I entertain for the fair sex, by alluding to their productions with gravity and candor. Acting upon this principle, I am constrained to observe at the outset, that the *Sonnet* has not been especially "glorified" by our countrywomen, many of whom exhibit but a feeble idea of the fine artistic uses to which it may be put. Nevertheless, sonnets of decided merit will be found in this section of my work.

Those of Mrs. E. Oakes Smith and Mrs. Kemble* come first in the order of selection, because among the published poems of these ladies the Sonnet occupies a position of unusual prominence. In reading them, one is struck by their general similarity of feeling. They seem to be the offspring of disappointed, if not gloomy spirits. Betrayed affection, aspirations overthrown, the nothingness of human deeds, and the vanity of human desires, — such are the favorite themes of these two sonneteers.

If the true purpose of poetry were to enervate and depress, instead of exalting the soul, I should commend such strains in terms of no measured praise. As it is, I think them false to nature, and false to art. Let me not, however, be unjust. Whenever these writers permit themselves to rise into more healthful regions of thought,

* Although an Englishwoman by blood and birth, so much of Mrs. Kemble's life has been spent in the United States — she has identified herself so thoroughly with our people — that it seems to me we have a right to claim her as a countrywoman by adoption. Hence her introduction in this place.

— whenever they cease to cry aloud "*vanitas vanitatum*," and to amplify the mournful proverb thus, —

"O weary, weary world, how full thou art
Of sin, of sorrow, and all mournful things," —

we listen to their singing with pleasure, for both are possessed of fancy, culture, command of words and imagery, and of good musical perception.

The sonnet, for example, by Mrs. Oakes Smith, called "The Wife," is touching and graphic ; and that on "Wayfarers" embodies a truth as old as the world, in language very natural and expressive.

Noticeable as a collection of happy conceits is Mrs. Kemble's sonnet commencing,

"What is my lady like ? thou fain wouldst know,"
and ending,

"She's like a pleasant path without an end ;
Like a strange secret, and a sweet surprise ;
Like a sharp axe of doom, whetted with blush-roses,
A casket full of gems, whose key one loses."

Still better is her sonnet on

"ECHO.

"Thou restless voice ! that, wandering up and down
These forest-paths, where for this many a day
I come to dream the summer hours away,
Mak'st answer to my voice with mocking tone, —
Echo ! thou air-born child of harmony,
How oft in sunny field, or shadowy wood,
By lone hillside, or cavern-cradled flood,
Have I held laughing converse, nymph, with thee !
This is thy dwelling, and along the wide
Oak-woven halls, that stretch on every side,
Murmuring sweet lullabies, I hear thee stray,
Hushing the dim-eyed Twilight, who all day,
From searching sunbeams hid in these cool bowers,
Sleeps on a bed of pale, night-blowing flowers !"

The sonnets of Miss Anne C. Lynch are written in a better and wiser strain than the foregoing. They are grave, but not sombre, and the spirit of a pure, gentle philosophy breathes through them all. Take the following as a specimen of this lady's style : —

“Go forth in life, O friend, not seeking love ! —
 A mendicant that with imploring eye
 And outstretched hand asks of the passer-by
 The alms his strong necessities may move.
 For *such* poor love, to pity near allied,
 Thy generous spirit may not stoop and wait, —
 A suppliant whose prayer may be denied,
 Like a spurned beggar's at a palace gate ; —
 But thy heart's affluence lavish, uncontrolled ;
 The largess of thy love give full and free,
 As monarchs in their progress scatter gold ;
 And be thy heart like the exhaustless sea,
 That *must* its wealth of cloud and dew bestow,
 Though tributary streams or ebb or flow ! ”

The sonnet commencing,

“The honey-bee that wanders all day long,”

is a beautiful piece of philosophy, beautifully expressed.

To Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale the credit is due of having bestowed more than ordinary pains upon the construction of her sonnets, all of which are *legitimate*. They treat of the domestic affections, and of the sphere and influence of *Woman*. The titles she has given them — such as “The Daughter,” “The Sister,” “The Wife,” “The Mother” — indicate clearly enough their scope and purpose.

Of the higher (perhaps I ought to say, the essential) elements of poetry — invention, imagination, passion — Mrs. Hale's sonnets are destitute ; but their feminine ten-

derness, and the universal value of the sentiments they inculcate, must always invest them with a certain interest and value. No one can doubt their earnestness, and they furnish a gentle voice to feelings that are common to our race, and are in themselves everlasting.

Mrs. Mary Noel McDonald, of New York, is one of the most copious of our sonneteers. A quick eye for the picturesque, and a capacity to grasp and describe correctly the obvious aspects of nature, have rendered her sonnets locally popular. Beyond these excellences, they have no poetical, and but little artistic, value. Their phraseology is of the conventional type, reminding me of "the peculiar poetic diction" of Hayley and the Della-Cruscan school. She describes the butterflies of June as "flying like winged jewels 'neath the skies"; and the summer rills are to her fancy "like chains of liquid diamonds." Gaudy, artificial similes occur so frequently in her verses as greatly to mar whatever merits they may be deemed to possess.

The remaining sonnets in our collection, by various female authors, exhibit so little individuality of thought or structure, that to characterize them particularly would be a tedious and useless task. Three of these sonnets, however, the productions respectively of Mrs. Emma C. Embury, Mrs. Elizabeth F. Ellett, and Mrs. Anna Maria Lowell, strike me as being worthy of mention.

The first, by Mrs. Embury, beginning,

"He who has travelled through some weary day," &c.,

is truthful and pathetic; and agreeable fancy and musical flow of verse distinguish the second, by Mrs. Ellett,—

"O weary heart! there is a rest for thee";

and the third, by Mrs. Lowell, I quote for its sincerity of tone, its womanly insight, and polished rhythmical ease.

“These rugged wintry days I scarce could bear,
Did I not know that in the early spring,
When wild March winds upon their errands sing,
Thou wouldst return, bursting on this still air,
Like those same winds, when, startled from their lair,
They hunt up violets, and free swift brooks
From icy caves, even as thy sweet looks
Bid my heart bloom, and sing, and break all care :
When drops with welcome rain the April day,
My flowers shall find their April in thine eyes,
Save there the rain in dreamy clouds doth stay,
As loath to fall out of those happy skies ; —
Yet sure, my love, thou art most like to May,
That comes with steady sun when April dies !”

I must here bring this essay to a close. It is necessarily imperfect. The difficulty of obtaining material, and the still greater difficulty of properly digesting and arranging it, have caused me much care and trouble. Then, the general character of the sonnets themselves, so few of which possess the vigor and originality which offer salient points for criticism, has embarrassed me throughout.

I trust, therefore, that my readers will make the due allowances. Had I exercised a severe critical judgment, the American portion of the volume would have been greatly reduced ; but in that case, many hundred lines of really respectable verse would have been excluded, leaving hardly a sufficient number of sonnets to justify their publication in connection with a work like that by Mr. Hunt.

S. A. L.

ENGLISH SONNETS.





ENGLISH SONNETS.

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

BRUNET AND PHYLLIS.

IF waker care, — if sudden pale color, —
If many sighs with little speech to plain, —
Now joy, now woe, if they my cheer distain, —
For hope of small, if much to fear therefore, —
To haste or slack my pace to less or more, —
Be sign of love, then do I love again.
If thou ask whom, — sure, since I did refrain
Brunet, that set my wealth in such a roar,
The unfeignéd cheer of Phyllis hath the place
That Brunet had ; — she hath, and ever shall.
She from myself now hath me in her grace ;
She hath in hand my wit, my will, and all.
My heart alone well worthy she doth stay,
Without whose help scant do I live a day.

See Essay, p. 67. The first part of this sonnet is supposed to have been suggested to Wyatt by the sonnet of Petrarca beginning,

“ S’ una fede amorosa, un cor non finto, ” —

of which he had elsewhere given an entire version. If so, the latter part may be equally supposed to have been suggested by some French song. I think I have a recollection of some such contrastment of a Phyllis and a Brunette in old French poetry. Yet these propositions and contrapositions are so common in love-poets, that the feeling may have originated with Sir Thomas himself; though he was a Petrarcist professed. In a court like that of Henry VIII. Wyatt may well enough have met with a Brunette of his own, who revolted him with her ostentation and her love of wealth, — setting his mercer's and jeweller's bills "in a roar."

The names of Brunet (Brunetta) and Phyllis in conjunction are to be found nowhere else, I believe, in English literature, except in Steele's amusing story of the two rival beauties in the *Spectator*, No. 80. Did he get them from Wyatt? It is pleasant to think so, and not at all unlikely. Wyatt was just the sort of man to be loved and admired by Steele.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

I.

DESCRIPTION OF SPRING AND SUMMER ;

Wherein everything renews, save only the Lover.

THE soote* season that bud and bloom forth brings
 With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale ;
 The nightingale, with feathers new, she sings ;
 The turtle to her make † hath told her tale ;
 Summer is come, for every spray now springs ;
 The hart hath hung his old head on the pale ;
 The buck in brake his winter coat he flings ;
 The fishes flete ‡ with new repaired scale ;
 The adder all her slough away she slings ; §
 The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale ; ||
 The busy bee her honey now she mings ; ¶
 Winter is worn, that was the flowers' bale ;
 And thus I see, among these pleasant things,
 Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs.

* sweet.

† mate.

‡ flit, float quickly.

§ throws off, slips off.

|| The old pronunciation of *small*.

¶ mingles.

II.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE TIME HE SPENT IN WINDSOR CASTLE.

WHEN Windsor walls sustained my wearied arm,
 My hand my chin, to ease my restless head,
 The pleasant plot, revested green with warm,*
 The blossomed boughs with lusty Vert y-spread,
 The flowered meads, the wedded birds so late,
 Mine eyes discover ; and to my mind resort
 The jolly woes, the hateless short debate,
 The rakehell ‡ life, that 'longs to love's disport ;
 Wherewith, alas ! the heavy charge of care
 Heaped in my breast breaks forth against my will
 In smoky sighs that overcast the air :
 My vaped eyes such dreary tears distil,
 The tender spring which quicken where they fall ;
 And I half bend, to throw me down withal.§

* warmth.

† spring.

‡ More properly, — says a note in Robert Bell's edition of Surrey, — "*rakel*, rash, careless, reckless. Rakehell was used to designate a dissolute profligate fellow." Some commentators, however, might choose to suppose that there was an involuntary, if not a candid, propriety in the word, when speaking of the Court of Henry VIII.

§ Some of the sentences in these verses are ill put together, per-

haps were incorrectly copied from the manuscript ; but the picture at the beginning, some of the expressions in the middle, — such as “jolly woes” and “hateless debate,” — and the evidence of passionate emotion at the close, render it worth transcribing. In a subsequent poem — not a sonnet — written when Surrey was put into confinement in the same place in consequence of a quarrel, he again mourns the pleasures he once enjoyed there : —

“Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour ;

The large green courts, where we were wont to hove (*hover*),

With eyes cast up into the Maidens’ tower (*the Maids of Honor*),

And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love.”

III.

EPITAPH ON HIS SQUIRE, THOMAS CLERE.

NORFOLK sprung thee, Lambeth holds thee dead ;
 Clere, of the Count of Cleremont, thou hight ;*
 Within the womb of Ormond's race thou bred,
 And saw'st thy cousin crownéd in thy sight.†
 Shelton for love, Surrey for lord thou chase ‡
 (Ay me ! whilst life did last, that league was tender) ;
 Tracing whose steps thou sawest Kelsal blaze,
 Landrecy burnt, and battered Boulogne render,§
 At Montreuil gates, hopeless of all recure,
 Thine Earl, half dead, gave in thy hand his will,
 Which cause did thee this pining death procure,
 Ere summers four times seven thou couldst fulfil.
 Ah, Clere ! if love had booted, care, or cost,
 Heaven had not won, nor earth so timely lost. ||

* wast called.

† Anne Boleyn.

‡ didst choose.

§ surrender.

|| This sonnet is complete of its kind. There is not a sentence which does not contain information ; not a word too much ; no want of increased interest ; all is strong, simple, and affecting.

Clere died of a wound received while he was attending his lord, as here mentioned. His family was of Norman origin ; and he was the son of Sir Robert Clere, of Ormsby in Norfolk, by a lady of the Boleyn family.

IV.

ON THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SARDANAPALUS.*

THE Assyrian King, in peace, with foul desire
 And filthy lusts that stained his regal heart,
 In war, that should set princely hearts on fire,
 Did yield, vanquisht for want of martial art.
 The dint of swords from kisses seeméd strange,
 And harder than his lady's side, his targe ;
 From glutton's feasts to soldier's fare, a change ;
 His helmet, far above a garland's charge ;
 Who scarce the name of manhood did retain,
 Drenchéd in sloth and womanish delight,
 Feeble of spirit, impatient of pain,
 When he had lost his honor and his right,
 (Proud, time of wealth ; in storms, appalled with dread,)
 Murdered himself, to show some manful deed.†

* A bitter covert satire on Henry the Eighth.

† There is a want of a proper nominative case to govern the verb "murdered" ; and "proud, time of wealth" is a forced way of saying "proud, *during* a time of wealth" ; otherwise this sonnet is excellent. By murdering himself to "show some manful deed," he means to intimate, that the only thing which was left for Henry to do, in order to show himself not inferior to Sardanapalus, was to be bold enough to commit suicide ; but, as Henry failed to do this, he is here delivered up to the disgust of posterity, as a thoroughly unmanly scoundrel.

The boldness of the sonnet is wonderful, if we consider the

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

I.

ON HIS HAVING OBTAINED A PRIZE AT A TOURNAMENT.

HAVING this day my horse, my hand, my lance
 Guided so well, that I obtained the prize,
 Both by the judgment of the English eyes
 And of some sent from that sweet enemy, France :
 Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance :
 Townfolks, my strength : a dancier judge applies
 His praise to sleight, which from good use doth rise :
 Some lucky wins impure it but to chance :
 Others, because, of both sides, I do raise
 My blood from them who did excel in this,
 Think nature me a man of arms did make.
 How far they shot awry ! The true cause is
 Stella looked on : and from her heavenly fire
 Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race.

times and the two men. Is it not probable that it was the real death-warrant of Surrey ? Henry pocketed an ill-omined quarrel with him on his way home in the east of Kent ; but what was that quarrel, but it even been slight, compared with the terrible in-
 vention ? One imagines Henry, with white-hot lips putting the copy of it into his pocket, and saying internally, "I'll murder you at all events." — *And he did.*

II.

DEATH AN ORDINANCE OF NATURE, AND THEREFORE GOOD.*

SINCE Nature's works be good, and death doth serve
As Nature's work, why should we fear to die?
Since fear is vain but when it may preserve,
Why should we fear that which we cannot fly?
Fear is more pain than is the pain it fears,
Disarming human minds of native might,
While each conceit an ugly figure bears,
Which were not evil, viewed in reason's light.
Our owly eyes, which dimmed with passions be,
And scarce discern the dawn of coming day,
Let them be cleared, and now begin to see
Our life is but a step in dusty way.

Then let us hold the bliss of peaceful mind;
Since this we feel, great loss we cannot find.

* Sung by Musidorus to Pyrocles in Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia," when the two friends are in danger of being put to death unexpectedly. The argument with which the sonnet sets out is a favorite with divine Marcus Antoninus in his "Meditations," and is, in truth, as logical as it is noble. And the argument respecting fear is of a like soundness. Fear is intended by nature to warn us from perils that we can avoid; what then has it to do with such as are unavoidable? We may feel them painfully, but we must not ap-

prehend them ignobly. We must not suppose, that in any of the ordinary courses of her operations Nature intends us evil.

I do not insert this sonnet for anything otherwise very good in it, but that we may feel ourselves a little longer in the company of the high mind from which it emanated. It is preceded in the *Arcadia* by a noble passage respecting the nature and condition of the soul after death; and for the reason just mentioned, and because it introduces the Sonnet itself, and the *Arcadia* is not often met with, we think the reader will not be sorry to have it here repeated.

“‘Take the pre-eminence in all things but in true loving,’ answered Musidorus; ‘for the confession of that no death shall get of me.’

“‘Of that,’ answered Pyrocles, soberly smiling, ‘I perceive we shall have a debate in the other world; if at least there remain anything of remembrance in that place.’

“‘I do not think the contrary,’ said Musidorus; ‘although you know it is greatly held, that with the death of body and senses, — which are not only the beginning, but dwelling and nourishing of passions, thoughts, and imaginations, — they failing, memory likewise fails, which riseth only out of them: and then is there left nothing but the intellectual part or intelligence, which, void of all moral virtues, — which stand in the mean of perturbations, — doth only live in the contemplative virtue and power of the omnipotent good, the soul of souls, and universal life of this great work; and therefore is utterly void from the possibility of drawing to itself these sensible considerations.’

“‘Certainly,’ answered Pyrocles, ‘I easily yield that we shall not know one another, and much less these past things, with a sensible or passionate knowledge; for, the cause being taken away, the effects follow. Neither do I think we shall have such a memory as we now have, which is but a relic of the senses, or rather a print the senses have left of things past in our thoughts; but it shall be a vital power of that very intelligence; which, as while it was here it held the chief seat of our life, and was, as it were, the last resort to which, of all our knowledges, the highest appeal came; and so, by that means, was never ignorant of our actions, though many times rebelliously resisted, — always, with this prison, dark-

ened : so much more being free of that prison, and returning to the life of all things, where all infinite knowledge is, it cannot but be a right intelligence — which is both his name and being — of things both present and past, though void of imagining to itself anything, but even grown like to his Creator, hath all things, with a spiritual knowledge, before it. The difference of which is as hard for us to conceive, as it was for us when we were in our mothers' wombs, to comprehend — if anybody would have told us — what kind of light we now in this life see, what kind of knowledge we now have. Yet now we do not only feel our present being, but we conceive what we were before we were born, though remembrance make us not do it, but knowledge, and though we are utterly without any remorse* of any misery we might then suffer. Even such and much more odds † shall there be at that second delivery of ours ; when, void of sensible memory, or memorative passion, we shall not see the colors, ‡ but lives, of all things that have been or can be ; and shall, as I hope, know our friendship, though exempt from the earthly cares of friendship, having both united it and ourselves in that high and heavenly love of the unquenchable light.'

"As he had ended his speech, Musidorus, looking with a heavenly joy upon him, sang this song unto him he had made, before love turned his muse to another subject." — *The Arcadia, now the fifth time published.* Dublin, 1621, fol.

* Reperception.

† Advantage.

‡ Appearances, as distinguished from essences.

III.

SONNET TO THE MOON.

WITH how sad steps, O Moon ! thou climb'st the skies,
How silently, and with how wan a face !
What ! may it be, that even in heavenly place
That busy Archer his sharp arrows tries ?
Sure, if that long with love acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case ;
I read it in thy looks, thy languished grace
To me that feel the like thy state describes.
Then, even of fellowship, O Moon ! tell me,
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit ?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be ?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess ?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness ?

IV.

SONNET TO SLEEP.

COME Sleep, O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The bailing place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
The indifferent judge between the high and low.
With shield of proof shield me from out the prease*
Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw ;
O make in me those civil wars to cease :
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland, and a weary head ;
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me
Livelier than elsewhere STELLA's image see.

* press, throng.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

ON SPENSER'S "FAERY QUEEN."*

METHOUGHT I saw the grave where Laura lay,
 Within that temple where the vestal flame
 Was wont to burn ; and passing by that way,
 To see that buried dust of living fame
 Whose tomb fair Love and fairer Virtue kept,
 All suddenly I saw the *Faery Queen* :
 At whose approach the soul of Petrarke wept,
 And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen
 (For they this Queen attended) ; in whose stead
 Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
 Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
 And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did perse ;
 Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,
 And curst the access of that celestial thief.†

* Headed by the author, "A Vision upon *this concept* of the Faery Queen"; for it was published among the prefatory verses.

† Two persons, I have no doubt, were included in the magnificent flattery of this sonnet, — Queen Elizabeth as well as Spenser ; for she it was whom the poet expressly imaged in his Queen of Fairyland ; and Sir Walter was not the man to let the occasion pass for extolling the great woman, their joint mistress. The Italics in the sonnet are copied from Todd's edition of Spenser, and I

have no doubt appeared in the original edition, and are the writer's own.

Raleigh's *abolition* of Laura, Petrarca, and Homer, all in a lump, in honor of his friend Spenser, is in the highest style of his wilful and somewhat domineering genius ; but everything in the process is as grandly as it is summarily done ; and welcome indeed from *such* a "courtier of the Queen" must have been this testimony to the great but no less courtly poet, — "that celestial thief."

EDMUND SPENSER.*

I.

TO HIS SONNETS, ON SENDING THEM TO HIS MISTRESS.

HAPPY, ye leaves ! when as those lily hands
Which hold my life in their dead-doing might
Shall handle you, and hold in love's soft bands,
Like captives trembling at the victor's sight ;
And happy lines ! on which, with starry light,
Those laming eyes will deign sometimes to look,
And read the sorrows of my dying spright
Written with tears in heart's close-bleeding book ;
And happy rhymes ! bathed in the sacred brook
Of Helicon, whence she derivéd is ;—
When ye behold that angel's blessed look,
My soul's long-lackéd food, my heaven's bliss,
Leaves, lines, and rhymes, seek her to please alone,
Whom if ye please, I care for other none.†

* For other sonnets of this great poet see the Introductory Essay, pp. 71-74.

† A sonnet like this is worth extracting, were it only for the sake of the beautiful and affecting line—

“Written with tears in heart's close-bleeding book” ;—

an idea imitated in a like spirit by one of our old dramatists, —

“Within the red-leaved tablets of the heart.”

II.

TO ONE WHO OBJECTED TO PRIDE IN HIS MISTRESS.

RUDELY thou wrongest my dear heart's desire,
In finding fault with her too portly pride.
The thing which I do most in her admire
Is of the world unworthy most envide :
For in those lofty looks is close implied
Scorn of base things, and 'sdain of foul dishonor ;
Threatening rash eyes which gaze on her so wide,
That loosely they ne dare to look upon her.
Such pride is praise ; such portliness is honor,
That boldened innocence bears in her eyes ;
And her fair countenance, like a goodly banner,
Spreads in defiance of all enemies.

Was never in this world aught worthy tried,

Without some spark of such self-pleasing pride.*

* This sonnet, saving the repeated *z*'s in the rhymes, is good ; but I must beg leave not to like the woman. Why should she be always defying what nobody, most likely, intended ? Something however is to be said for her, if she was the same person—as she is believed to have been—whom the poet describes as being of humble origin, and whom he subsequently married.

III.

SPRING SENT TO HIS MISTRESS LIKE A HERALD.*

FRESH Spring, the herald of love's mighty king,
In whose coat-armor richly are displayed
All sorts of flowers the which on earth do spring,
In goodly colors gloriously arrayed,
Go to my Love, where she is careless laid
Yet in her winter's bower, not well awake :
Tell her the joyous time will not be stayed,
Unless she do him by the forelock take ;
Bid her therefòre herself soon ready make,
To wait on Love amongst his lovely crew ;
Where every one that misseth then her make,
Shall be by him amerced with penance due.

Make haste therefòre, sweet love, whilst it is prime ;
For none can call again the passéd time.

* I insert this sonnet on account of the picture at the beginning, which is agreeably in the taste of the age. The sonnet looks like a "Valentine." In the word "make"—*mate*—in the eleventh line, which rhymes with the same word in another sense, Spenser avails himself, as he frequently does, of a privilege common to poetry in many other countries, Italy included.

IV.

ABSENCE LAMENTED, DOVE-LIKE.

LIKE as the culver on the baréd bough
Sits mourning for the absence of her mate ;
And in her songs sends many a wishful vow
For his return that seems to linger late :
So I alone, now left disconsolate,
Mourn to myself the absence of my Love ;
And, wandering here and there all desolate,
Seek with my plaints to match that mournful dove :
Ne joy of aught that under heaven doth hove *
Can comfort me, but her own joyous sight ;
Whose sweet aspect both God and man can move
In her unspotted pleasance to delight.

Dark is my day, whiles her fair light I miss ;
And dead my life, that wants such lively bliss.

* hover, exist.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

I.

THE POET LAMENTS TO A FRIEND HIS PROFESSION AS AN
ACTOR.

O, FOR my sakè do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means, which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.
Pity me then, and wish I were renewed ;
Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
Potions of eysell 'gainst my strong infection :
No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance, to correct correction.

Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.*

* This sonnet, though it has one admirable passage, — about the dyer's hand, — is not selected on account of its superiority to the general run of the author's compositions of this kind, but because Shakespeare is here "unlocking his heart," and because all his sonnets appear to have been written after he had entered upon a line

of life for which he and others had not yet procured its just social consideration.

“Public means, which public manners breeds”

is very harsh versifying, — to say nothing of the bad grammar, which was a license of the time. And the concluding rhyme “assure ye” and “cure me,” is no rhyme. The nature

“subdued

To what it works in, like the dyer’s hand”

is true Shakespearian writing.

I have noticed the faulty passages, because cultivators of the Sonnet must not be misled, even by Shakespeare. He can afford to err, where it would be presumption to follow him.

“Eysell” is vinegar. Etymologists — in whose way so small a thing as a consonant is never allowed to stand — derive the word from the German *Essig*, — vinegar.

II.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF BEING LOVED BY A NOBLE NATURE
A TRIUMPH OVER ALL TROUBLES.

WHEN, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
 I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
 And look upon myself and curse my fate,
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
 Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
 With what I most enjoy contented least,
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising, —
 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
 Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate ;
 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.*

* By the "outcast state" to which he alludes in this sonnet, Shakespeare is supposed to mean the cause of trouble lamented in the one preceding. The modesty evinced in the wishes for the features and faculties of other persons has, in such a man especially, been deservedly admired; and the pause and the change of tone, full of triumphant emotion, at the words, "Haply I think on thee," produce the utmost effect of masterliness in art from the perfection of the feeling. If the sonnet were set to music, the passage would suggest to a worthy composer a fine change in the key.

The gladdening influences of a lover's thoughts, the cheering light of a pure affection, were never depicted with truer feeling than in this sonnet.

III.

TO HIS LADY UPON HER PLAYING ON THE VIRGINALS.¹

How oft when thou, my music, music play'st
Upon that blesséd wood, whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st
The wiry concord that my ear confounds,
Do I envÿ those jacks, that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand !
To be so tickled they would change their state
And situation with those dancing chips,
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more blest than living lips :
 Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
 Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.*

* This is not one of Shakespeare's best sonnets ; but, as he is found interesting under any circumstances that present him to the imagination, I thought the reader might like to see him in a lady's company while she was playing on the musical instrument that was the prototype of the wooden piano-forte. To find him thus situated seems like the next thing to having him with us to *tea*, or criticising the last new sonata.

The term "jack," since confined to that hidden portion of the key which strikes upon the wires or strings of this kind of instrument, appears in Shakespeare's time to have been applied to the whole of

it. "Saucy jack," here pleasantly turned into a pun upon the keys, was a common term for a presumptuous fellow.

Had an Italian poet translated this sonnet, the language of his musical country would have supplied him with a term for the keys much more appropriate than either, — *tasti* or *tasterelle*, — "little tasters." Such is the sensitive Italian tongue. But how good is

"The tender inward of thy hand" !

and how well Shakespeare has described a "slow movement" in the line

"O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait" !

IV.

WHAT SINGING BIRDS AND FLOWERS ARE IN THE ABSENCE
OF THE BELOVED PERSON.

FROM you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
That * heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odor and in hue
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew ;
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose :
They were, though sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you ; you, pattern of all those.
Yet seemed it winter still ; and, you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.

* A poetical license for *so* that.

V.

TRUE LOVE NOT AT THE MERCY OF TIME AND CIRCUM-
STANCE.

LET me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no ; it is an ever fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken :
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth 's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love 's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come ;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even unto the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.*

* It would be difficult to cite a finer passage of moral poetry than this description of the master passion. How true and how ennobling to our nature ! We at once recognize in it the abstraction of that conception which has found a dwelling and a name in the familiar forms of Desdemona, Juliet, Imogen, Cordelia, of Romeo, and of Othello, too, if that character be correctly understood. If this sonnet was written before his dramas, then it was the pregnant thought from which were destined to spring those in-

imitable creations of female character that have been loved, as if they were living beings, by thousands.

“Admit impediments” is very prosaic. It would not at all do to *sing*. Yet in a poet like Shakespeare, who had words and will, and who if he had chosen to do so, could have begun his sonnet in a strain the most musical, the phrase, in reading, acquires a sort of deliberate commencing dignity. We know how much poetry will follow. Nor do the grand peremptory words disappoint us.

VI.

HE LAMENTS THAT THE COUNTENANCE OF SOME GREAT
AND WORTHY PATRON SEEMS TO BE DIVERTED FROM
HIM.

FULL many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy,
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace.
Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendor on my brow ;
But, out, alack ! he was but one hour mine ;
The region cloud * hath masked him from me now.

Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth ;
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun stain-
eth.

* By "region cloud" is meant the cloud over the whole landscape, — the cloud occupying the whole region of the air.

We are not sure that we have not extracted this sonnet solely on account of the magnificent second line. Still, the rest is not unworthy of it.

VII.

AFFECTION MOST LOVING WHEN IT MOST FEARS TO LOSE. .

THAT time of year thou mayst in me behold,
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.*

* We quote this sonnet partly for the fine amplification it contains of a well-known phrase in *Macbeth*, and chiefly for the surpassing beauty of the images illustrative of a poet's silent old age. We challenge the poetry of England and America against the fourth line, —

“Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.”

VIII.

TRUE SELF-SACRIFICE OF LOVE.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly, sullen bell
Give notice to the world that I am fled
From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell :
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it ; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
Oh ! if, I say, you look upon this verse,
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
But let your love even with my life decay ;
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.*

* This divine sonnet has been noticed in the Introductory Essay,
p. 77.

BEN JONSON.

TO THE KING'S HOUSEHOLD ON THEIR WITHHOLDING HIS
ALLOWANCE OF SACK.*

WHAT can the cause be, when the King hath given
His poet sack, the Household will not pay?
Are they so scanted in their store? or driven,
For want of knowing the poet, to say him nay?
Well, they should know him, would the King but grant
His poet leave to sing his Household true :
He'd frame such ditties of their store and want,
Would make the very Greencloth to look blue,
And rather wish, in their expense of sack,
So the allowance from the King to use,
As the old bard should no canary lack :
'T were better spare a butt, than spill his muse ;
For in the genius of a poet's verse
The King's fame lives. Go now, deny his tierce.†

* To which he was entitled as Poet Laureate.

† The tierce was not denied, but it is said to have been further withheld, till Ben wrote a more civil request. The misgovernment of all the Stuarts often caused their exchequers to run dry; and perhaps the poet offended higher persons than he suspected, by this amusing but confident remonstrance. One can imagine the momentary perplexity and confusion of the King—Charles the First—if the verses were shown him, between his regard for his Laureate's praises, and annoyance at his irritability.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND, OF HAWTHORNDEN.

I.

YOUTH UNEXPECTEDLY SMITTEN BY LOVE.

As the young fawn, when winter's gone away
 (Unto a sweeter season granting place),
 More wanton grown by smiles of heaven's fair face,
 Leaveth the silent woods at break of day,
 And now on hills and now by brooks doth prey
 On tender flowers, secure and solitar,*
 Far from all cabins, and where shepherds are ;
 Where his desire him guides, his foot doth stray ;
 He feareth not the dart, nor other arms,
 Till he be shot into the noblest part
 By cunning archer who in dark bush lies :
 So innocent, not fearing coming harms,
 Wandering was I that day when your fair eyes,
 World-killing shafts, gave death-wounds to my heart.†

* Solitary, — a Scotticism, from the French *solitaire* ; that is to say, from the ordinary pronunciation of that word ; — *solitary* itself having come from the older poetical pronunciation *solitairě*.

† This appears to have been one of the earliest productions of Drummond. It is translated from a sonnet of Bembo, which is printed with it in the edition of Drummond's poems published by the Maitland Club (Edinburgh, 1832) ; and it is there accompanied by two variations of itself, which look like poetical studies. One is in couplets, which he calls "freer sort of rhyme," — or in his older

northern spelling, "frier sort of rime." The other is "paraphrasticalie translated." The study seems to lie chiefly in the versification; and he is so bent on giving variety to the experiments, that the stricken deer is a "fawn" in the first effusion, a "stag" in the second, and a "hart" in the third. It thus appears that Drummond did not get his reputation as a versifier for nothing. The sonnet is very pleasing and graceful.

II.

SENSE OF THE FRAGILITY OF ALL THINGS AND OF THE
UNSEASONABLENESS OF PASSION IN LOVE, NO PRE-
VENTIVE OF LOVE OR POETRY.

I KNOW that all beneath the moon decays,
! And what by mortals in this world is brought
In time's great periods shall return to naught ;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days.
I know how all the Muse's heavenly lays,
With toil of sprite which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought ;
And that naught lighter is than airy praise.
I know frail beauty like the purple flower
To which one morn oft birth and death affords ;
That love a jarring is of minds' accords,
Where sense and will invassall reason's power.
Know what I list, this all cannot me move,
But that, O me ! I both must write and love.

III.

HE MOURNS THE LOSS OF HIS MISTRESS.*

SWEET soul, which in the April of thy years
So to enrich the heaven mad'st poor this round,†
And now, with golden rays of glory crowned,
Most blest abid'st above the sphere of spheres ;
If heavenly laws, alas ! have not thee bound
From looking to this globe that all up-bears,
If ruth and pity there above be found,
O deign to lend a look unto these tears.
Do not disdain, dear ghost, this sacrifice ;
And though I raise not pillars to thy praise,
My offerings take. Let this for me suffice :
My heart, a living pyramid, I raise ;
And whilst kings' tombs with laurels flourish green,
Thine shall with myrtles and these flowers be seen.

* Taken from him on their wedding-day.

† orb, — the globe.

IV.

RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS LOST BRIDE.

ALEXIS,* here she stayed ; among these pines,
Sweet hermitress, she did alone repair ;
Here did she spread the treasure of her hair,
More rich than that brought from the Colchian mines ;
She set her by these muskéd eglantines, —
The happy place the print seems yet to bear ; —
Her voice did sweeten here thy sugared lines,
To which winds, trees, beasts, birds, did lend an ear ;
Me here she first perceived, and here a morn
Of bright carnations did o'erspread her face ;
Here did she sigh, here first my hopes were born,
And first I got a pledge of promised grace ;
But ah ! what served it to be happy so,
Sith † passéd pleasures double but new woe.

* This name appears to have been intended for that of his friend William Alexander, Earl of Sterling.

† since.

V.

TO A BIRD SINGING.

SWEET Bird, that sing'st away the early hours
Of winters past or coming, void of care,
Well pleaséd with delights which present are,
Fair seasons, budding sprays, sweet smelling flowers ;
To rocks, to springs, to rills, from leafy bowers
Thou thy Creator's goodness dost declare,
And what dear gifts on thee he did not spare,
A stain to human sense in sin that lowers.
What soul can be so sick which by thy songs
(Attired in sweetness) sweetly is not driven
Quite to forget earth's turmoils, spites, and wrongs,
And lift a reverend eye and thought to heaven !
Sweet artless songster ! thou my mind dost raise
To airs of spheres — yes, and to angels' lays.

VI.

THE PRAISE OF A SOLITARY LIFE.

THRICE happy he who by some shady grove,
Far from the clamorous world, doth live his own ;
Though solitary, who is not alone,
But doth converse with that eternal love.
O how more sweet is bird's harmonious moan,
Or the hoarse sobbings of the widowed dove,
Than those smooth whisperings near a prince's throne,
Which good make doubtful, do the evil approve !
Or how more sweet is Zephyr's wholesome breath,
And sighs embalmed which new-born flowers unfold,
Than that applause vain honor doth bequeath !
How sweet are streams to poison drunk in gold !
The world is full of horrors, troubles, slights ;
Woods' harmless shades have only true delights.

JOHN MILTON.

I.

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY.*

CAPTAIN, or Cölönel, or Knight in arms,
 Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
 If deed of honor did thee ever please,
 Guard them, and him within protect from harms :
 He can requite thee ; for he knows the charms
 That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
 And he can spread thy name o'er land and seas,
 Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
 Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower :
 The great Emathian conqueror † bid spare
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
 Went to the ground ; and the repeated air
 Of sad Electra's poet had the power
 To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.‡

* In 1642, during the civil wars ; when the army of Charles the First had arrived at Brentford, against the poet's friends, the Republicans.

† Alexander ; when ninety thousand Thebans were killed, and thirty thousand taken prisoners.

‡ During the conquest of Athens by Lysander, when some verses of Euripides happened to be sung at a banquet given to a council of war.

II.

ON THE DETRACTION WHICH FOLLOWED UPON THE WRITING
OF CERTAIN TREATISES.

I DID but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs :
As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs,
Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny,
Which after held the sun and moon in fee.*
But this is got by casting pearl to hogs,
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
License they mean, when they cry Liberty ;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good ;
But from that mark how far they rove we see,
For all this waste of wealth, and loss of blood.

* The story of the peasants in Ovid, who were thus transformed for insulting Latona and her babes, Apollo and Diana.

III.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.*

AVENGE, O Lord ! thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold ;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not. In thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyr's blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant ; that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

* In 1665, by order of the Duke of Savoy. It is delightful to be able to say, in this year 1856, that the slaughter has been "avenged" in a better manner than the stern poet desired ; namely, by the erection of a Protestant Chapel in the capital of Piedmont, and under the auspices of a king of the Duke of Savoy's house.

IV.

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless,* though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide;
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”
I fondly ask. But Patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work, or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

* An allusion to the parable of the talents, Matthew xxv. 14–30.
“And he speaks,” adds Bishop Newton, “with great modesty of himself, as if he had not five, or two, but only one talent.”

V.

ON THE SAME.

TO CYRIAC SKINNER.

CYRIAC, this three-years-day these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light their seeing have forgot ;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them, overplied
In Liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's
vain mask,
Content, though blind, had I no better guide.

VI.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still ;
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly Hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love ; O, if Jove's will
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom, in some grove nigh ;
As thou from year to year, hast sung too late
For my relief, yet had'st no reason why :
Whether the Muse or Love call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

VII.

INVITATION TO AN ATTIC FEAST.

LAWRENCE,* of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
From the hard season gaining? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

* This Mr. Lawrence was the son of the President of Cromwell's Council.

VIII.

A DREAM OF HIS LOST WIFE.

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine (as whom, washed from spot of child-bed taint,
Purification in th' old Law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint)
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind :
Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night ! *

* This conclusion has been thought a "conceit," but it is not. The idea is perfectly warranted by the feeling. Returning day, to those who have undergone such calamities, does bring back a veritable night-like gloom to the soul, darker even for the light.

But with no irreverence be it said, that Milton should not have used the word "*taint*" in connection with child-bed. There is no taint where the mind is not tainted ; and the word on such an occasion desecrated both mind and heart.

THOMAS GRAY.

ON THE DEATH OF HIS FRIEND WEST.*

IN vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire ;
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire :
These ears, alas ! for other notes repine ;
A different object do these eyes require ;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine ;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men ;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear ;
To warm their little loves the birds complain ;
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear ;
And weep the more, because I weep in vain.

* For a defence of this beautiful sonnet against the hypercriticism of Wordsworth, see Introductory Essay, pp. 82, 83.

THOMAS WARTON.

I.

WRITTEN ON A BLANK LEAF OF DUGDALE'S MONASTICON.*

DEEM not devoid of elegance the sage,
By Fancy's genuine feelings unbeguiled,
Of painful pedantry the poring child,
Who turns of these proud domes the historic page,
Now sunk by Time and Henry's fiercer rage.†
Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smiled
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts on themes, unclassic falsely styled,
Intent. While cloistered Piety displays
Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores
New manners, and the pomp of elder days,
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores.
Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
Of hoar antiquity, but strewn with flowers.

* This and the next sonnet were favorites with Hazlitt.

† Alluding to the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry the Eighth.

II.

AFTER SEEING THE COLLECTION OF PICTURES AT WILTON
HOUSE.

FROM Pembroke's princely dome, where mimic Art
Decks with a magic hand the dazzling bowers,
Its living hues where the warm pencil pours,
And breathing forms from the rude marble start —
How to life's humbler scene can I depart,
My breast all glowing from these gorgeous towers?
In my low cell how cheat the sullen hours?
Vain the complaint; for Fancy can impart
(To Fate superior, and to Fortune's doom)
Whate'er adorns the stately-storied hall.
She, 'mid the dungeon's solitary gloom,
Can dress the Graces in their Attic pall;
Bid the green landscape's vernal beauty bloom,
And in bright trophies clothe the twilight wall.*

* This sonnet, though containing several commonplace expressions, has been justly admired, both for its language in other respects, and for the truthfulness of its feeling. But the author would have given it an additional grace, if he had written a companion sonnet, informing us what verse it was that set the first lines of it flowing; to wit, his father's, — another Thomas Warton, also — like himself — Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and worthy estimator of a student's modest apartments. The main thought in the

two poems is not the same, but there is a similar impression of contrast and contentment, and the father's exordium in particular was evidently in the mind of the son. The effusion of the elder Warton is so pleasing, and records a feeling with which so many persons can sympathize, that although its power is but on a par with the unambitiousness of the subject, I think the reader will not be sorry to have it repeated.

VERSES WRITTEN AFTER SEEING WINDSOR CASTLE.

“From beauteous Windsor’s high and storied halls,
Where Edward’s chiefs start from the glowing walls,
To my low cot from ivory beds of state,
Pleased I return unenvious of the great.
So the bee ranges o’er the varied scenes
Of corn, of heaths, of fallows, and of greens,
Pervades the thicket, soars above the hill,
Or murmurs to the meadow’s murmuring rill,
Now haunts old hollowed oaks, deserted cells,
Now seeks the low vale lily’s silver bells,
Sips the warm fragrance of the greenhouse bowers,
And tastes the myrtle and the citron’s flowers ;
At length returning to the wonted comb,
Prefers to all his little straw-built home.”

III.

ON REVISITING THE RIVER LODDON.

AH ! what a weary race my feet have run
Since first I trod thy banks with alders crowned,
And thought my way was all through fairy ground,
Beneath thy azure sky and golden sun, —
Where first my muse to lisp her notes begun !
While pensive memory traces back the round
Which fills the varied interval between ;
Much pleasure, more of sorrow, marks the scene.
Sweet native stream ! those skies and suns so pure
No more return to cheer my evening road !
Yet still one joy remains, that not obscure
Nor useless, all my vacant days have flowed
From youth's gay dawn to manhood's prime mature,
Nor with the Muse's laurel unbestowed.

SAMUEL JACKSON PRATT.*

REVISITING A BIRTHPLACE WHICH WAS NOT HAPPY.

SCENES of my boyish days, — yet scenes of woe
From cradled childhood up to manhood's bloom, —
At thy approach why do my eyes o'erflow,
As if in grief to meet were still our doom ?
Yet why, though half involved in shades of night
Dim through the river's mist thy spire appears,
Impatient do I strain my aching sight,
Eager to own each object through my tears ?
And as thy well-remembered bridge I gain,
And draw more near, alas ! my natal earth,
Though faster fall the drops, though sharp the pain,
I hail my birthplace, though I weep my birth.
Ah, tender tears, which tender thoughts impart,
And leave no room for malice in my heart !

* Author of "Liberal Opinions," "Emma Corbet," and other works, — a writer who, if he had known how to discipline his mind, would have obtained distinction. I found this sonnet in Mr. Lofft's collection. Though the phraseology is here and there artificial, much of it is otherwise, and the impression affecting. It is an instance of what has been said in the *Essay* respecting the desirableness of founding compositions of this kind on direct personal experience.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

I.

POETRY AND SORROW.*

SHOULD the lone wanderer, fainting on his way,
Rest for a moment of the sultry hours,
And, though his path through thorns and roughness lay,
Pluck the wild rose or woodbine's gadding flowers;
Weaving gay wreaths beneath some sheltering tree,
The sense of sorrow he awhile may lose :
So have I sought thy flowers, fair Poesy !
So charmed my way with friendship and the Muse.
But darker now grows life's unhappy day,
Dark with new clouds of evil yet to come ;
Her pencil sickening Fancy throws away,
And weary Hope reclines upon the tomb,
And points my wishes to that tranquil shore,
Where the pale spectre, Care, pursues no more !

* Elegiac Sonnets and other Poems, by Charlotte Smith. 1797.

II.

WRITTEN AT THE CLOSE OF SPRING.

THE garlands fade that Spring so lately wove ;
Each simple flower, which she had nursed in dew,
Anemones that spangled every grove,
The primrose wan, and harebell mildly blue.
No more shall violets linger in the dell,
Or purple orchis variegate the plain,
Till Spring again shall call forth every bell,
And dress with humid hands her wreaths again.
Ah, poor humanity! so frail, so fair,
Are the fond visions of thy early day,
Till tyrant passion and corrosive care
Bid all thy fairy colors fade away !
Another May new buds and flowers shall bring :
Ah! why has happiness no second Spring?

III.

ON CHILDREN AT PLAY.

SIGHING I see yon little troop at play,
By sorrow yet untouched, unhurt by care,
While free and sportive they enjoy to-day,
“Content and careless of to-morrow’s fare.”*
O, happy age! when Hope’s unclouded ray
Lights their green path, and prompts their simple mirth,
Ere yet they feel the thorns that lurking lay
To wound the wretched pilgrims of the earth,
Making them rue the hour that gave them birth,
And threw them on a world so full of pain,
Where prosperous folly treads on patient worth,
And to deaf pride misfortune pleads in vain.
Ah! — for their future fate how many fears
Oppress my heart, and fill mine eyes with tears!

* Thomson.

IV.

TO THE MOON.

QUEEN of the silver bow ! by thy pale beam,
Alone and pensive, I delight to stray,
And watch thy shadow trembling in the stream,
Or mark the floating clouds that cross thy way.
And while I gaze, thy mild and placid light
Sheds a soft calm upon my troubled breast ;
And oft I think, fair planet of the night,
That in thy orb the wretched may have rest ;
The sufferers of the earth perhaps may go,
Released by death, to thy benignant sphere,
And the sad children of despair and woe
Forget in thee their cup of sorrow here,
O that I soon may reach thy world serene,
Poor wearied pilgrim in this toiling scene !

V.

ON THE DEPARTURE OF THE NIGHTINGALE.

SWEET poet of the woods, a long adieu !

Farewell, soft minstrel of the early year !

Ah ! 't will be long ere thou shalt sing anew,

And pour thy music on " the night's dull ear."

Whether on Spring thy wandering flights await,

Or whether silent in our groves you dwell,

The pensive muse shall own you for her mate,

And still protect the song she loves so well.

With cautious step the love-lorn youth shall glide

Through the lone brake that shades thy mossy nest ;

And shepherd girls from eyes profane shall hide

The gentle bird that sings of pity best :

For still thy voice shall soft affections move,

And still be dear to sorrow and to love.

VI.

“OUT OF DOORS WHILE THE HAMLET IS SLEEPING.”

WHILE thus I wander, cheerless and unblest,
And find in change of place no change of pain,
In tranquil sleep the village laborers rest,
And taste repose that I pursue in vain.
Hushed is the hamlet now ; and faintly gleam
The dying embers from the casement low
Of the thatched cottage, while the Moon's wan beam
Lends a new lustre to the dazzling snow.
O'er the cold waste, amid the freezing night,
Scarce heeding whither, desolate I stray.
For me, pale eye of evening ! thy soft light
Leads to no happy home ; my weary way
Ends but in dark vicissitude of care :
I only fly from doubt to meet despair.

ANNA SEWARD.*

I.

RISING EARLY TO READ, ON A WINTER'S MORNING.

I LOVE to rise ere gleams the tardy light
 (Winter's pale dawn) ; and as warm fires illume,
 And cheerful tapers shine around the room,
 Through misty windows bend my musing sight,
Where, round the dusky lawn, the mansions white
 With shutters closed, peer faintly through the gloom
 That slow recedes ; while yon gray spires assume,
 Rising from their dark pile, an added height
By indistinctness given : then to decree
 The grateful thoughts to God, ere they unfold
 To friendship or the Muse, or seek with glee
Wisdom's rich page. O hours more worth than gold,
 By whose blest use we lengthen life, and, free
 From drear decays of age, outlive the old.

* "The Poetical Works of Anna Seward, edited by Walter Scott, Esq. Edinburgh, 1810."

II.

CONSOLATORY POWER OF A LOVE OF NATURE.

THE evening shines in May's luxuriant pride,
And all the sunny hills at distance glow,
And all the brooks, that through the valley flow,
Seem liquid gold. O, had my fate denied
Leisure, and power to taste the sweets that glide
Through wakened minds, as the blest seasons go
On their still varying progress, for the woe
My heart has felt what balm had been supplied?
But where great Nature smiles, as here she smiles,
'Mid verdant vales, and gently swelling hills,
And glassy lakes, and mazy murmuring rills,
And narrow wood-wild lanes, her spell beguiles
Th' impatient sighs of grief, and reconciles
Poetic minds to life, with all her ills.

III.

NO BARRENNESS IN NATURE WITHOUT BEAUTY.

FROM these wild heights, where oft the mists descend
In rains that shroud the sun and chill the gale,
Each transient gleaming interval we hail,
And rove the naked valleys, and extend
Our gaze around where yon vast mountains blend
With billowy clouds that o'er their summits sail,
Pondering how little Nature's charms befriend
The barren scene, monotonous and pale,
Yet solemn when the darkening shadows fleet
Successive o'er the wide and silent hills,
Gilded by wat'ry sunbeams : then we meet
Peculiar pomp of vision. Fancy thrills ;
And owns there is no scene so rude and bare
But Nature sheds or grace or grandeur there.

IV.

A STORMY NOVEMBER EVENING, GRADUALLY CLEARING UP
IN A MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY.

CEASED is the rain, but heavy drops yet fall
From the drenched roof; yet murmurs the sunk wind
Round the dim hills; can yet a passage find
Whistling through yon cleft rock, and ruined wall.
Loud roar the angry torrents, and appall,
Though distant. A few stars, emerging kind,
With green rays tremble through their misty shrouds;
And the moon gleams between the sailing clouds
On half the darkened hill. Now blasts remove
The shadowing clouds, and on the mountain's brow,
Full-orbed she shines. Half sunk within its cove
Heaves the lone boat, with gulphing sound:—and lo!
Bright rolls the settling lake, and brimming rove
The vale's blue rills, and glitter as they flow!

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

TO HOPE.*

O EVER skilled to wear the form we love !
To bid the shapes of fear and grief depart ;
Come, gentle Hope ! with one gay smile remove
The lasting sadness of an aching heart.
Thy voice, benign enchantress ! let me hear ;
Say that for me some pleasures yet shall bloom,
That fancy's radiance, friendship's precious tear,
Shall soften, or shali chase, misfortune's gloom.
But come not glowing in the dazzling ray
Which once with dear illusions charmed my eye ;
O, strew no more, sweet flatterer ! on my way ,
The flowers I fondly thought too bright to die :
Visions less fair will soothe my pensive breast,
That asks not happiness, but longs for rest.

* This sonnet stands at the head of fifteen others in the collected poems of the authoress, and she has appended to it the following note :—

“ I commence the sonnets with that ‘ To Hope,’ from a predilection in its favor for which I have a proud reason : it is that of Mr. Wordsworth, who lately honored me with his visits while at Paris, having repeated it to me from memory, after a lapse of many years.”

MRS. MARY DARBY ROBINSON.*

THE TEMPLE OF CHASTITY.

HIGH on a rock coeval with the skies,
A temple stands, reared by immortal powers
To Chastity divine ! Ambrosial flowers,
Twining round icicles, in columns rise,
Mingling with pendent gems of orient dyes.
Piercing the air, a golden crescent towers,
Veiled by transparent clouds ; while smiling hours
Shake from their varying wings celestial joys !
The steps of spotless marble, scattered o'er
With deathless roses armed with many a thorn,
Lead to the altar. On the frozen floor,
Studded with tear-drops petrified by scorn,
Pale vestals kneel, the goddess to adore,
While Love, his arrows broke, retires forlorn.

* Earliest known mistress of George IV. ; a circumstance from which the sonnet, which is not without merit in itself, derives a melancholy interest. It is extracted from the Rev. Mr. Dyce's "Specimens of British Poetesses."

SIR SAMUEL EGERTON BRYDGES.*

ECHO AND SILENCE.

In eddying course when leaves began to fly,
And Autumn in her lap the store to strew,
As 'mid wild scenes I chanced the Muse to woo
Through glens untrod, and woods that frowned on high,
Two sleeping Nymphs with wonder mute I spy !
And lo, she's gone ! In robe of dark green hue,
'T was "Echo from her sister Silence flew ;
For quick the hunter's horn resounded to the sky !
In shade affrighted Silence melts away ;
Not so her sister : — hark ! for onward still
With far heard step she takes her listening way,
Bounding from rock to rock, and hill to hill !
Ah, mark the merry maid in mockful play
With thousand mimic tones the laughing forest fill.

* From his "Recollections of Foreign Travel." It is also in his "Autobiography."

WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES.*

I.

CHURCH BELLS.

(*"Written on landing at Obend, and hearing, very early in the morning, the Carillons."*)

How sweet the tuneful bells' responsive peal !
As when, at opening morn, the fragrant breeze
Breathes on the trembling sense of wan disease !
So piercing to my heart their force I feel !
And hark ! with lessening cadence now they fall,
And now, along the white and level tide,
They fling their melancholy music wide,
Bidding me many a tender thought recall
Of summer days, and those delightful years
When by my native streams, in life's fair prime,
The mournful magic of their mingling chime
First waked my wondering childhood into tears !
But seeming now, when all those days are o'er,
The sounds of joy once heard, and heard no more !

* *Poetical Works of W. L. Bowles*. 1800.

II.

A GRAVE IN A CONVENT.

IF chance some pensive stranger, hither led
 (His bosom glowing from majestic views,
 The gorgeous dome, or the proud landscape's hues)
 Should ask who sleeps beneath this lowly bed, —
'T is poor Matilda ! — To the cloistered scene,
 A mourner, beauteous and unknown, she came,
 To shed her tears unmarked, and quench the flame
 Of fruitless love : yet was her look serene
As the pale moonlight in the midnight aisle ;
 Her voice was soft, which yet a charm could lend,
 Like that which spoke of a departed friend,
And a meek sadness sat upon her smile ! —
 Now, far removed from every earthly ill,
 Her woes are buried, and her heart is still.

III.

TO TIME.

O TIME ! who know'st a lenient hand to lay
Softest on sorrow's wound, and slowly thence
(Lulling to sad repose the weary sense)
The faint pang stealest, unperceived, away ;
On thee I rest my only hope at last,
And think when thou hast dried the bitter tear
That flows in vain o'er all my soul held dear,
I may look back on every sorrow past,
And meet life's peaceful evening with a smile.
As some lone bird, at day's departing hour,
Sings in the sunbeam, of the transient shower
Forgetful, though its wings are wet the while :
Yet, ah ! how much must that poor heart endure
Which hopes from thee, and thee alone, a cure !

IV.

A LANDSCAPE.

BEAUTIFUL Landscape ! I could look on thee
For hours, unmindful of the storm and strife
And mingled murmurs of tumultuous life.
Here, all is still as fair, — the stream, the tree,
The wood, the sunshine on the bank ; no tear, —
No thought of Time's swift wing, or closing night,
Which comes to steal away the long sweet light, —
No sighs of sad humanity are here.
Here is no tint of mortal change ; the day,
Beneath whose light the dog and peasant boy
Gambol, with look and almost bark of joy,
Still seems, though centuries have passed, to stay :
Then gaze again, that shadowed scenes may teach
Lessons of peace and love, beyond all speech.

V.

WINTER EVENING AT HOME.

FAIR Moon ! that at the chilly day's decline
Of sharp December, through my cottage pane
Dost lovely look, smiling, though in thy wane ;
In thought to scenes serene and still as thine
Wanders my heart, whilst I by turns survey
Thee slowly wheeling on thy evening way,
And this my fire, whose dim, unequal light,
Just glimmering, bids each shadowy image fall
Sombrous and strange upon the darkening wall,
Ere the clear tapers chase the deepening night !
Yet thy still orb, seen through the freezing haze,
Shines calm and clear without ; and whilst I gaze,
I think, Around me in this twilight gloom
I but remark mortality's sad doom ;
Whilst hope and joy, cloudless and soft, appear
In the sweet beam that lights thy distant sphere.

VI.

HOPE.

As one who, long by wasting sickness worn,
Weary has watched the lingering night, and heard,
Heartless, the carol of the matin bird
Salute his lonely porch, now first at morn
Goes forth, leaving his melancholy bed ;
He the green slope and level meadow views,
Delightful bathed in slow ascending dews ;
Or marks the clouds that o'er the mountain's head,
In varying forms, fantastic wander white ;
Or turns his ear to every random song
Heard the green river's winding marge along,
The whilst each sense is steeped in still delight :
With such delight o'er all my heart I feel
Sweet Hope ! thy fragrance pure and healing incense
steal !

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

I.

ON LEAVING SCHOOL.*

(Written at Eighteen.)

FAREWELL, parental scenes ! a sad farewell !

To you my grateful heart still fondly clings,
Though fluttering round on Fancy's burnished wings,
Her tale of future joy Hope loves to tell.

Adieu, adieu ! ye much-loved cloisters pale !

Ah ! would those happy days return again,
When 'neath your arches, free from every stain,
I heard of guilt, and wondered at the tale !

Dear haunts ! where oft my simple lays I sang,

Listening meanwhile the echoing of my feet :

Lingering I quit you with as great a pang

As when, erewhile, my weeping childhood, torn

By early sorrow from my native seat,

Mingled its tears with hers, my widowed parent lorn.

* At Christ's Hospital, where he was contemporary with Lamb, who has recorded the wonderful powers of his conversation, even when a school-boy.

II.

“WITH FIELDING’S AMELIA.”*

VIRTUES and woes alike too great for man
In the soft tale oft claim the useless sigh :
For vain the attempt to realize the plan ;
On folly’s wings must imitation fly.
With other aim has Fielding here displayed
Each social duty and each social care ;
With just yet vivid coloring portrayed
What every wife should be, what many are.
And sure the parent of a race so sweet
With double pleasure on the page shall dwell ;
Each scene with sympathizing breast shall meet,
While reason still with smiles delights to tell
Maternal Hope, that the loved progeny
In all but sorrows shall Amelias be.

* The heading given to this sonnet by the author has no other words than those which are here given. The sonnet, however, is evidently addressed to some mother. Its extremely conventional style announces nothing of the future author of “Christabel” and the “Ancient Mariner”; yet we extract it in honor both of the poet and of Fielding; of the poet because Fielding was a favorite with him to the last; and of Fielding because it is one of his glories to have made an impression on a poet so fine. The “virtues and

woes" alluded to in the first line are those of Richardson; the human nature of whose novels, compared with that of Fielding, appeared to Coleridge to be forced, like flowers in a hothouse. He said that reading Fielding after Richardson was like going out of a close, stifling room into the open air.

III.

ON SEEING A YOUTH AFFECTIONATELY WELCOMED BY A
SISTER.

I too a sister had ! too cruel Death !

How sad remembrance bids my bosom heave !

Tranquil her soul as sleeping infant's breath ;

Meek were her manners as a vernal eve.

Knowledge, that frequent lifts the bloated mind,

Gave her the treasure of a lowly breast ;

And Wit, to venom'd Malice oft assigned,

Dwelt in her bosom in a turtle's nest.

Cease, busy Memory ! cease to urge the dart,

Nor on my soul her love to me impress !

For oh ! I mourn in anguish ; and my heart

Feels the keen pang, th' unutterable distress.

Yet wherefore grieve I that her sorrows cease,

For life was misery, and the grave is peace.

IV.

TO BOWLES.

My heart has thanked thee, Bowles ! for those soft strains,
Whose sadness soothes me, like the murmuring
Of wild-bees in the sunny showers of spring !
For hence, not callous to the mourner's pains
Through youth's gay prime and thornless paths I went :
And when the mightier throes of mind began,
And drove me forth, a thought-bewildered man !
Their mild and manliest melancholy lent
A mingled charm, such as the pang consigned
To slumber, though the big tear it renewed ;
Bidding a strange, mysterious pleasure brood
Over the wavy and tumultuous mind,
As the great Spirit erst with plastic sweep
Moved on the darkness of the unformed deep.

V.

THOUGHTS DURING THE SINGING OF A BEAUTIFUL SONG.

TO WILLIAM LINLEY.

WHILE my young cheek retains its healthful hues,
And I have many friends who hold me dear,
Linley! methinks I would not often hear
Such melodies as thine, lest I should lose
All memory of the wrongs and sore distress
For which my miserable brethren weep!
But should uncomforted misfortunes steep
My daily bread in tears and bitterness,
And if at death's dread moment I should lie
With no beloved face at my bedside,
To fix the last glance of my closing eye,
Methinks such strains, breathed by my angel guide,
Would make me pass the cup of anguish by,
Mix with the blest, nor know that I had died!

VI.

TO THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROBBERS."

SCHILLER ! that hour I would have wished to die,
If through the shuddering midnight I had sent
From the dark dungeon of the tower time-rent
That fearful voice, a famished Father's cry,
Lest in some after moment aught more mean
Might stamp me mortal ! A triumphant shout
Black Horror screamed, and all her goblin rout
Diminished shrunk from the more withering scene !
Ah, bard tremendous in sublimity !
Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood
Wandering at eve with finely frenzied eye
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood !
Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood :
Then weep aloud in a wild ecstasy !

VII.

ON THE LAST FAILURE OF KOSCIUSKO.

O WHAT a loud and fearful shriek was there,
As though a thousand souls one death-groan poured !
Ah me ! they saw beneath a hireling's sword
Their KOSCIUSKO fall ! Through the swart air
(As pauses the tired Cossack's barbarous yell
Of triumph) on the chill and midnight gale
Rises with frantic burst, or sadder swell,
The dirge of murdered Hope ! while Freedom pale
Bends in such anguish o'er her destined bier,
As if from eldest time some Spirit meek
Had gathered in a mystic urn each tear
That ever on a patriot's furrowed cheek
Fit channel found ; and she had drained the bowl
In the mere wilfulness and sick despair of soul !

VIII.

NEWS OF THE BIRTH OF A CHILD.

(Composed on a journey homeward, the author having received intelligence of the birth of a son, September 20, 1796.)

OFt o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll
Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,
Mixed with such feelings as perplex the soul
Self-questioned in her sleep ; and some have said
We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.
O my sweet baby ! when I reach my door,
If heavy looks should tell me thou art dead
(As sometimes, through excess of hope, I fear)
I think that I should struggle to believe
Thou wert a spirit, to this nether sphere
Sentenced for some more venial crime to grieve ;
Didst scream, then spring to meet Heaven's quick
 reprieve,
While we wept idly o'er thy little bier.

IX.

A NEW-BORN CHILD AND ITS PARENT.

(To a friend who asked the author how he felt when the nurse first presented his infant to him.)

CHARLES ! my slow heart was only sad, when first
I scanned that face of feeble infancy ;
For dimly on my thoughtful spirit burst
All I had been, and all my child might be !
But when I saw it on its mother's arm,
And hanging at her bosom (she the while
Bent o'er its features with a tearful smile)
Then I was thrilled and melted, and most warm
Impressed a father's kiss ; and all beguiled
Of dark remembrance and presageful fear,
I seemed to see an angel form appear —
'T was even thine, beloved woman mild !
So for the mother's sake the child was dear,
And dearer was the mother for the child.

X.

FAREWELL TO LOVE.

FAREWELL, sweet Love ! yet blame you not my truth :
More fondly ne'er did mother eye her child
Than I your form. *Yours* were my hopes of youth,
And as *you* shaped my thoughts, I sighed or smiled.
While most were wooing wealth, or gayly swerving
To pleasure's secret haunts, and some apart
Stood strong in pride, self-conscious of deserving,
To you I gave my whole, weak, wishing heart.
And when I met the maid that realized "
Your fair creations, and had won her kindness,
Say but for her if aught in earth I prized !
Your dream alone I dreamt, and caught your blindness.
O grief ! — but farewell, Love ! I will go play me
With thoughts that please me less, and less betray me.

XI.

FANCY IN NUBIBUS.

(Composed by the sea-side, October, 1817.)

O, IT is pleasant, with a heart at ease,
Just after sunset, or by moonlight skies,
To make the shifting clouds be what you please,
Or let the easily persuaded eyes
Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould
Of a friend's fancy ; or with head bent low,
And cheek aslant, see rivers flow of gold
'Twixt crimson banks ; and then, a traveller, go
From mount to mount, through CLOUDLAND, gorgeous
land !
Or listening to the tide, with closéd sight,
Be that blind bard, who on the Chian strand
By those deep sounds possessed, with inward light
Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssee
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea.*

* This sonnet is very characteristic of the rich indolence of the author's temperament. The very toning of the rhymes is as careless as the mood in which he is indulging.

XII.

TO THE RIVER OTTER.

DEAR native brook ! wild streamlet of the West !
How many various-fated years have past,
What happy, and what mournful hours, since last
I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
Numbering its light leaps ! yet so deep imprest
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny ray,
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
Thy crossing-plank, thy marge with willows gray,
And bedded sand, that, veined with various dyes,
Gleamed through thy bright transparence ! On my way
Visions of childhood ! oft have ye beguiled
Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs :
Ah ! that once more I were a careless child !

CHARLES LAMB.

I.

TO MISS KELLY, THE ACTRESS.

You are not, Kelly, of the common strain,
That stoop their pride and female honor down
To please that many-headed beast, *The Town*,
And vend their lavish smiles and tricks for gain ;
By fortune thrown amid the actor's train,
You keep your native dignity of thought ;
The plaudits that attend you come unsought,
As tributes due unto your natural vein.
Your tears have passion in them, and a grace
Of genuine freshness, which our hearts avow ;
Your smiles are winds whose ways we cannot trace,
That vanish and return we know not how, —
And please the better from a pensive face,
A thoughtful eye, and a reflecting brow.

II.

CRAVING FOR LEISURE.

THEY talk of Time, and of Time's galling yoke,
That like a millstone on man's mind doth press,
Which only works and business can redress ;
Of divine Leisure such foul lies are spoke,
Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke.
But might I, fed with silent meditation,
Assoiléd live from that fiend Occupation —
Improbis Labor, which my spirits hath broke —
I'd drink of time's rich cup, and never surfeit ;
Fling in more days than went to make the gem
That crowned the white top of Methusalem ;
Yea, on my weak neck take, and never forfeit,
Like Atlas bearing up the dainty sky,
The heaven-sweet burden of eternity.

III.

IN THE ALBUM OF EDITH S——.

IN Christian world MARY the garland wears !

REBECCA sweetens on a Hebrew's ear ;

Quakers for pure PRISCILLA are more clear ;

And the light Gaul by amorous NINON swears ;

Among the lesser lights how LUCY shines !

What air of fragrance ROSAMOND throws round !

How like a hymn doth sweet CECILIA sound !

Of MARTHAS and of ABIGAILS few lines

Have bragged in verse. Of coarsest household stuff

Should homely JOAN be fashioned. But can

You BARBARA resist, or MARIAN ?

And is not CLARE for love excuse enough ?

Yet, by my faith in numbers, I profess,

These all than Saxon EDITH please me less.

IV.

WRITTEN AT CAMBRIDGE.

I WAS not trained in academic bowers,
And to those learned streams I nothing owe
Which copious from those twin fair founts do flow ;
Mine have been anything but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nurseling, Granta, of thy lap ;
My brow seems tightening with the doctor's cap,
And I walk *gownéd* ; feel unusual powers !
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech,
Old Ramus' * ghost is busy at my brain,
And my skull teems with notions infinite.
Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
Truths which transcend the searching schoolmen's
vein,
And half had staggered that stout Stagirite.†

* The famous French logician.

† Aristotle.

CHARLES LLOYD.*

TO NOVEMBER.

DISMAL November ! me it soothes to view,
At parting day, the scanty foliage fall
From the wet fruit-tree ; or the gray stone-wall,
Whose cold films glisten with unwholesome dew ;
To watch the yellow mists from the dank earth
Enfold the neighboring copse ; while, as they pass,
The silent rain-drops bend the long rank grass,
Which wraps some blossom's unmaturéd birth.
And through my cot's lone lattice, glimmering gray,
The damp, chill evenings have a charm for me,
Dismal November ! for strange vacancy
Summoneth then my very heart away !
Till from mist-hidden spire comes the slow knell,
And says, that in the still air Death doth dwell !

* "Nugæ Canoræ. Poems by Charles Lloyd, Author of 'Edmund Oliver,' 'Isabel,' and translator of Alfieri."

BERNARD BARTON.

I.

TO MY WIFE.

THE butterfly, which sports on gaudy wing ;
The brawling brooklet, lost in foam and spray,
As it goes dancing on its idle way ;
The sunflower, in broad daylight glistening ;
Are types of her who in the festive ring
Lives but to bask in fashion's vain display,
And glittering through her bright but useless day,
"Flaunts, and goes down a disregarded thing !"
Thy emblem, Lucy, is the busy bee,
Whose industry for future hours provides ;
The gentle streamlet, gladding as it glides
Unseen along ; the flower which gives the lea
Fragrance and loveliness, are types of thee,
And of the active worth thy modest merit hides.

II.

TO A GRANDMOTHER.*

"Old age is dark and unlovely." — OSMAN.

O, SAY not so ! A bright old age is thine,
Calm as the gentle light of summer eves,
Ere twilight dim her dusky mantle weaves ;
Because to thee is given, in thy decline,
A heart that does not thanklessly repine
At aught of which the hand of God bereaves,
Yet all He sends with gratitude receives ; —
May such a quiet, thankful close be mine !
And hence thy fireside chair appears to me
A peaceful throne, which thou wert formed to fill ;
Thy children ministers who do thy will ;
And those grandchildren, sporting round thy knee,
Thy little subjects, looking up to thee
As one who claims their fond allegiance still.

* A good sonnet. Dixi. — CHARLES LAMB.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

I.

PLEASANT, VOLUNTARY PRISON OF THE SONNET.

NUNS fret not at their convent's narrow room ;
And hermits are contented with their cells ;
And students with their pensive citadels ;
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy ; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells :
In truth the prison unto which we doom
Ourselves no prison is ; and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground,
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.*

* It is a very bold general proposition to say that "nuns fret not at their narrow rooms" and that "hermits are content with their cells." Thousands of nuns, there is no doubt, have fretted horribly, and do fret ; and hermitages have proved so little satisfactory, that we no longer hear of their existence in civilized countries. We are to suppose, however, that the poet alludes only to such nuns and hermits as have been willing to be solitary. So also in regard to

II.

PLACID OBJECTS OF CONTEMPLATION.

NOT Love, not War, nor the tumultuous swell
Of civil conflict, nor the wrecks of change,
Nor Duty struggling with afflictions strange,
Not these alone inspire the tuneful shell ;
But where untroubled peace and concord dwell,
There also is the Muse not loath to range,
Watching the twilight smoke of cot or grange
Skyward ascending from a woody dell.
Meek aspirations please her, lone endeavor,
And sage content, and placid melancholy ;
She loves to gaze upon a crystal river,
Diaphanous, because it travels slowly.
Soft is the music that would charm forever ;
The flower of sweetest smell is shy and lowly.

the spinning maids, and the weavers. The instances are not thoroughly happy ; for the spinning and the weaving are too often anything but voluntary, however cheerfully made the best of. The rest of the sonnet is very good and pleasant, and the reflection respecting " the weight of too much liberty " admirable.

III.

WANTING SLEEP.

O GENTLE Sleep ! do they belong to thee,
These twinklings of oblivion ? Thou dost love
To sit in meekness, like the brooding Dove,
A captive never wishing to be free.
This tiresome night, O Sleep ! thou art to me
A Fly, that up and down himself doth shove
Upon a fretful rivulet, now above,
Now on the water vexed with mockery.
I have no pain that calls for patience, no ;
Hence am I cross and peevish as a child,
Am pleased by fits to have thee for my foe,
Yet ever willing to be reconciled :
O gentle Creature ! do not use me so,
But once and deeply let me be beguiled.

IV.

LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

(Suggested by a picture painted by Sir George Howland Beaumont, Bart.)

PRAISED be the Art whose subtle power could stay
Yon cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape ;
Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day ;
Which stopped that band of travellers on their way,
Ere they were lost within the shady wood ;
And showed the bark upon the glassy flood
Forever anchored in her sheltering bay.
Soul-soothing Art ! which Morning, Noontide, Even,
Do serve with all their changeful pageantry ;
Thou, with ambition modest yet sublime,
Here, for the sight of mortal man, hast given
To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
The appropriate calm of blest eternity.

V.

A LIGHT IN A DISTANT WINDOW AMONG MOUNTAINS.

EVEN as a dragon's eye that feels the stress
Of a bedimming sleep, or as a lamp
Suddenly glaring through sepulchral damp,
So burns yon Taper 'mid a black recess
Of mountains, silent, dreary, motionless ;
The Lake below reflects it not ; the sky,
Muffled in clouds, affords no company
To mitigate and cheer its loneliness.
Yet, round the body of that joyless Thing
Which sends so far its melancholy light,
Perhaps are seated in domestic ring
A gay society, with faces bright,
Conversing, reading, laughing ; — or they sing,
While hearts and voices in the song unite.

VI.

PERSONAL TALK.

I AM not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk
Of friends who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbors daily, weekly, in my sight ;
And, for my chance acquaintance, ladies bright,
Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,
These all wear out of me, like forms with chalk
Painted on rich men's floors, for one feast-night.
Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire ;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

VII.

PERSONAL TALK.

(CONTINUED.)

“YET life,” you say, “is life ; we have seen and see,
And with a living pleasure we describe ;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity.
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe.”
Even be it so : yet still among your tribe,
Our daily world’s true worldlings, rank not me !
Children are blest, and powerful ; their world lies
More justly balanced ; partly at their feet,
And part far from them : — sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet ; *
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a slave ; the meanest we can meet.

* “In notes by distance made more sweet.” — COLLINS.

VIII.

PERSONAL TALK AND BOOKS.

WINGS have we, and as far as we can go
We may find pleasure : wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low :
Dreams, books, are each a world ; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good :
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble am I,
To which I listen with a ready ear.
Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear : —
The gentle Lady married to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.

IX.

PERSONAL TALK.

(CONCLUDED.)

NOR can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine ; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking ; rancor, never sought,
Comes to me not ; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought ;
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbor, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares, —
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays !
Oh ! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

X.

“COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPT. 3, 1803.”

EARTH has not anything to show more fair :
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep,
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still ! *

* I cannot refrain from asking the reader to recall his feelings when he has happened to pass along the streets of a city yet in its slumbers, and, unless my own deceive me, he will find, I think, an echo to them in this sonnet.

XI.

A PARSONAGE IN OXFORDSHIRE.

WHERE holy ground begins, unhallowed ends,
Is marked by no distinguishable line ;
The turf unites, the pathways intertwine ;
And, wheresoe'er the stealing footstep tends,
Garden, and that domain where kindred, friends,
And neighbors rest together, here confound
Their several features, mingled like the sound
Of many waters, or as evening blends
With shady night. Soft airs from shrub and flower
Waft fragrant greetings to each silent grave ;
And while those lofty poplars gently wave
Their tops, between them comes and goes a sky
Bright as the glimpses of eternity
To saints accorded in their mortal hour.*

* There is great merit in the above as a piece of landscape description, illuminated with a very rich moral light, the imagery of the closing lines especially evincing admirable taste.

XII.

LONDON, 1802.*

MILTON ! thou shouldst be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee : she is a fen
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
O raise us up, return to us again,
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power !
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart :
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

* So headed by the author. England had then made its short-lived peace with France under the Consulate ; but why Mr. Wordsworth should call upon the spirit of the great regicide to object to it, in behalf of the ordinary policy of George III., is not easy to see. It was not uncommon for our church and state poet to make use of Milton and his friends in this manner, whenever it suited him. He appears to have assumed as a matter of course, that Milton, being at once a great poet and a moralist, must of necessity have been

XIII.

SONNET.

IT is a beauteous evening, calm and free ;
The holy time is quiet as a nun,
Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea :
Listen ! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth, with his eternal motion, make
A sound like thunder — everlastingly.
Dear child ! dear girl ! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not, therefore, less divine :
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee, when we know it not.*

the property of him and his party, however widely the Republicans and they may have differed in other respects. A strange poetical license surely !

* In the same spirit Coleridge speaks of "the *sacred* light of Childhood." — *The Friend*, London, 1818, iii. 46.

XIV.

TO THE PLANET VENUS,—AN EVENING STAR.

(Composed at Loch-Lomond.)

THOUGH joy attend thee orient at the birth
Of dawn, it cheers the lofty spirit most
To watch thy course when daylight, fled from earth,
In the gray sky hath left his lingering ghost,
Perplexed, as if between a splendor lost
And splendor slowly mustering. Since the sun,
The absolute, the world-absorbing one,
Relinquished half his empire to the host,
Emboldened by thy guidance, holy star,
Holy as princely, who that looks on thee,
Touching, as now, in thy humility
The mountain borders of this seat of care,
Can question that thy countenance is bright,
Celestial Power! as much with love as light.

XV.

AFTER VISITING THE FIELD OF WATERLOO.

A WINGÉD Goddess, clothed in vesture wrought
Of rainbow colors, — one whose port was bold,
Whose overburdened hand could scarcely hold
The glittering crowns and garlands which it brought,
Hovered in air above the far-famed spot.
She vanished, leaving prospect blank and cold
Of wind-swept corn that wide around us rolled
In dreary billows, wood, and meagre cot,
And monuments that soon must disappear ;
Yet a dread local recompense we found ;
While glory seemed betrayed, while patriot zeal
Sank in our hearts, we felt as men *should* feel
With such vast hoards of hidden carnage near ;
And horror breathing from the silent ground.*

* Yet in another poem on this subject, he says that "Carnage" is God's "daughter"! Such perilous inconsistency is there in playing with the edge-tools of theological metaphysics.

XVI.

THE WORST PANGS OF SORROW.

SURPRISED by joy, impatient as the wind
I turned to share the transport — oh ! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find ?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind, —
But how could I forget thee ? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss ? That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more ;
That neither present time nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

XVII.

DEATH CONQUERING AND DEATH CONQUERED.

METHOUGHT I saw the footsteps of a throne
Which mists and vapors from mine eyes did shroud, —
Nor view of who might sit thereon allowed ;
But all the steps and ground about were strown
With sights the ruefullest that flesh and bone
Ever put on ; a miserable crowd,
Sick, hale, old, young, who cried before that cloud,
“Thou art our King, O Death ! to thee we groan.”
Those steps I clomb ; the mists before me gave
Smooth way ; and I beheld the face of one
Sleeping alone within a mossy cave,
With her face up to heaven ; that seemed to have
Pleasing remembrance of a thought foregone ;
A lovely Beauty in a summer grave ! *

* I hope I am doing no injustice to Wordsworth. If so, the plenitude of his genius can afford it. But I have an impression of having met with this sonnet, or something very like it, before ; I think, in *Italian*.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

I.

TO A LARK.

O THOU sweet lark, who in the heaven so high
Twinkling thy wings, dost sing so joyfully,
I watch thee soaring with a deep delight,
And when at last I turn mine aching eye
That lags below thee in the infinite,
Still in my heart receive thy melody.
O thou sweet lark, that I had wings like thee !
Not for the joy it were in yon blue light
Upward to mount, and from my heavenly height
Gaze on the creeping multitude below ;
But that I soon would wing my eager flight
To that loved home, where Fancy even now
Hath fled, and Hope looks onward through a tear,
Counting the weary hours that hold her here !

II.

THE SHIP SETTING OUT.

STATELY yon vessel sails adown the tide,
To some far distant land adventurous bound ;
The sailors' busy cries from side to side
Pealing among the echoing rocks resound ;
A patient, thoughtless, much-enduring band,
Joyful they enter on their ocean way,
With shouts exulting leave their native land,
And know no care beyond the present day.
But is there no poor mourner left behind
Who sorrows for a child or husband there ?
Who at the howling of the midnight wind
Will wake, and tremble in her boding prayer ?
So may her voice be heard, and Heaven be kind !
Go, gallant Ship, and be thy fortune fair !

III.

THE SHIP IN A STORM.

O God ! have mercy in this dreadful hour
On the poor mariner ! In comfort here,
Safe sheltered as I am, I almost fear
The blast that rages with resistless power.
What were it now to toss upon the waves,
The maddened waves, and know no succor near ;
The howling of the storm alone to hear,
And the wild sea that to the tempest raves ;
To gaze amid the horrors of the night,
And only see the billows' gleaming light ;
Then in the dread of death to think of her
Who, as she listens sleepless to the gale,
Puts up a silent prayer, and waxes pale !
O God ! have mercy on the mariner !

IV.

THE SHIP RETURNING.

SHE comes majestic with her swelling sails,
The gallant ship ; along her watery way
Homeward she drives before the favoring gales.
Now flirting at their length the streamers play,
And now they ripple with the ruffling breeze.
Hark to the sailors' shouts ! the rocks rebound,
Thundering in echoes to the joyful sound.
Long have they voyaged o'er the distant seas ;
And what a heart-delight they feel at last,
So many toils, so many dangers past,
To view the port desired, he only knows
Who on the stormy deep for many a day
Hath tost, aweary of his watery way,
And watched, all anxious, every wind that blows !

EDWARD HOVELL-THURLOW, LORD THURLOW.

I.

SUMMER.

THE Summer, the divinest Summer burns ;
The skies are bright with azure and with gold ;
The mavis and the nightingale, by turns,
Amid the woods a soft enchantment hold ;
The flowering woods, with glory and delight,
Their tender leaves unto the air have spread ;
The wanton air, amid their valleys bright,
Doth softly fly, and a light fragrance shed ;
The nymphs within the silver fountains play,
And angels on the golden banks recline
Wherein great Flora, in her bright array,
Hath sprinkled her ambrosial sweets divine :
Or, else, I gaze upon that beauteous face,
O Amoret ! and think these sweets have place.

II.

THE HARVEST MOON.

THE crimson Moon, uprising from the sea,
With large delight foretells the harvest near :
Ye shepherds, now prepare your melody,
To greet the soft appearance of her sphere !
And, like a page, enamored of her train,
The star of even glimmers in the west :
Then raise, ye shepherds, your observant strain,
That so of the Great Shepherd here are blest !
Our fields are full of the time-ripened grain,
Our vineyards with the purple clusters swell :
Her golden splendor glimmers on the main,
And vales and mountains her bright glory tell :
Then sing, ye shepherds ! for the time has come
When we must bring the enrichéd harvest home !

PROFESSOR JOHN WILSON.

I.

THE EVENING CLOUD.

A CLOUD lay cradled near the setting sun, —
A gleam of crimson tinged its braided snow ;
Long had I watched the glory moving on,
O'er the still radiance of the lake below ;
Tranquil its spirit seemed, and floated slow ;
E'en in its very motion there was rest ;
While every breath of eve that chanced to blow
Wafted the traveller to the beauteous west.
Emblem, methought, of the departed soul,
To whose white robe the gleam of bliss is given,
And by the breath of mercy made to roll
Right onward to the golden gates of Heaven ;
Where to the eye of faith it peaceful lies,
And tells to man its glorious destinies.

II.

THE LAKE IN STORM.*

THERE is a lake hid far among the hills,
That raves around the throne of solitude,
Not fed by gentle streams, or playful rills,
But headlong cataract and rushing flood :
There gleam no lovely hues of hanging wood,
No spot of sunshine lights her sullen side ;
For horror shaped the wild in wrathful mood,
And o'er the tempest heaved the mountain's pride.
If thou art one, in dark presumption blind,
Who vainly deem'st no spirit like to thine,
That lofty genius deifies thy mind,
Fall prostrate here at Nature's stormy shrine,
And, as the thunderous scene disturbs thy heart,
Lift thy changed eye, and own how low thou art.

* From "The Isle of Palms."

III.

THE LAKE IN CALM.

Is this the lake, the cradle of the storms,
Where silence never tames the mountain-roar,
Where poets fear their self-created forms,
Or, sunk in trance severe, their God adore?
Is this the lake, forever dark and loud
With wave and tempest, cataract and cloud?
Wondrous, O Nature! is thy sovereign power,
That gives to horror hours of peaceful mirth;
For here might beauty build her summer-bower!
Lo! where yon rainbow spans the smiling earth,
And, clothed in glory, through a silent shower
The mighty sun comes forth, a godlike birth;
While, 'neath his loving eye, the gentle Lake
Lies like a sleeping child too blest to wake!

IV.

NATURE'S ORGAN-MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Go up among the mountains, when the storm
Of midnight howls, but go in that wild mood,
When the soul loves tumultuous solitude,
And through the haunted air, each giant form
Of swinging pine, black rock, or ghostly cloud,
That veils some fearful cataract tumbling loud,
Seems to thy breathless heart with life imbued.

'Mid those gaunt, shapeless things thou art alone !
The mind exists, thinks, trembles through the ear,
The memory of the human world is gone,
And time and space seem living only *here*.

O, worship thou the visions then made known,
While sable glooms round Nature's temple roll,
And her dread anthem peals into thy soul !

CHARLES MACKAY.

I.

ANGELIC VISITANTS.

ON Mamre's plain, beside the Patriarch's door,
The ministering angels sat ; the world was young,
And men beheld what they behold no more ;—
Ah, no ! The harps of Heaven are not unstrung !
The angelic visitants may yet appear
To those who seek them ! Lo ! at Virtue's side,
Its friend, its prop, its solace, and its guide,
Walks FAITH, with upturned eyes and voice of cheer,
A visible angel. Lo ! at Sorrow's call,
HOPE hastens down, an angel fair and kind,
And whispers comfort whatsoe'er befall ;
While CHARITY, the seraph of the mind,
White-robed and pure, becomes each good man's guest,
And makes this Earth a Heaven to all who love her best.

II.

LOVE AND BEAUTY.

BEAUTY and Love — and are they not the same ?

The one is both, and both are but the one,

Pervasive they of all around the sun,

Of one same essence, differing but in name.

Lo ! when pure Love lights his immortal flame,

He, and all Earth and Heaven in Beauty shine ;

And when true Beauty shows her face divine,

Love permeates the universal frame.

Holy of holies ! mystery sublime !

Who truly loves is beautiful to see,

And scatters Beauty wheresoe'er he goes —

They fill all space ; they move the wheels of Time ;

And evermore from their dread unity

Through all the firmaments Life's ocean flows.

WILLIAM SOTHEY.

THE WINTER'S MORN.

ARTIST unseen ! that, dipt in frozen dew,
Hast on the glittering glass thy pencil laid,
Ere from yon sun the transient visions fade,
Swift let me trace the forms thy fancy drew !
Thy towers and palaces of diamond hue,
Rivers and lakes of lucid crystal made,
And hung in air hoar trees of branching shade,
That liquid pearl distil : thy scenes renew,
Whate'er old bards or later fictions feign,
Of secret grottos underneath the wave,
Where Nereids roof with spar the amber cave ;
Or bowers of bliss, where sport the fairy train,
Who, frequent by the moonlight wanderer seen,
Circle with radiant gems the dewy green.

HENRY KIRKE WHITE.

I.

ON HEARING THE SOUNDS OF AN ÆOLIAN HARP.

So ravishingly soft upon the tide
Of the infuriate gust it did career,
It might have soothed its rugged charioteer,
And sunk him to a zephyr, then it died,
Melting in melody, and I descried,
Borne to some wizard stream, the form appear
Of Druid sage, who on the far-off ear
Poured his lone song, to which the surge replied ;
Or thought I heard the hapless pilgrim's knell,
Lost in some wild enchanted forest's bounds,
By unseen beings sung ; or are these sounds
Such as, 't is said, at night are known to swell
By startled shepherd on the lonely heath,
Keeping his night-watch sad, portending death !

II.

RETIREMENT.

GIVE me a cottage on some Cambrian wild,
Where, far from cities, I may spend my days,
And, by the beauties of the scene beguiled,
May pity man's pursuits, and shun his ways.
While on the rock I mark the browsing goat,
List to the mountain-torrent's distant noise,
Or the hoarse bittern's solitary note,
I shall not want the world's delusive joys ;
But with my little scrip, my book, my lyre,
Shall think my lot complete, nor covet more ;
And, when, with time, shall wane the vital fire,
I'll raise my pillow on the desert shore,
And lay me down to rest where the wild wave
Shall make sweet music o'er my lonely grave.

JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE.*

TO NIGHT.

MYSTERIOUS Night ! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue ?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
And, lo ! creation widened in man's view.

Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun ! or who could find,
Whilst fly, and leaf, and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind ?
Why do we, then, shun death with anxious strife ?
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life ?

* The well-known and estimable Anglo-Spaniard, who was born of an English family which had emigrated to the Peninsula, and who came back to the country of his ancestors with other Spanish patriots fleeing from the tyranny of the infamous Ferdinand the Second.

Coleridge pronounced this sonnet "the best in the English language." Perhaps if he had said the best in English poetry, the judgment might have appeared less disputable. In language some little imperfections are discernible, which do not detract, however, from its singular merits even in that respect, especially considering

GEORGE GORDON NOEL, LORD BYRON.

I.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON.

ETERNAL spirit of the chainless mind !

Brightest in dungeons, Liberty ! thou art ;

For there thy habitation is the heart, —

The heart which love of thee alone can bind ;

And when thy sons to fetters are consigned, —

To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,

Their country conquers with their martyrdom,

And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.

Chillon ! thy prison is a holy place,

And thy sad floor an altar ; for 't was trod,

Until his very steps have left a trace

Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,

By Bonnivard ! May none those marks efface !

For they appeal from tyranny to God.

that the author was not young when he came into England, and that he then spoke English like a foreigner.

In point of *thought* the sonnet stands supreme, perhaps above all in any language. Nor can we ponder it too deeply, or with too hopeful a reverence.

II.

HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY BEAUTY COMBINED.

THY cheek is pale with thought, but not from woe,
And yet so lovely that if mirth could flush
Its rose of whiteness with the brightest blush,
My heart would wish away that ruder glow ;—
And dazzle not thy deep blue eyes, — but oh !
While gazing on them sterner eyes will gush,
And into mine my mother's weakness rush,
Soft as the last drops round heaven's airy bow.
For, through thy long dark lashes, low depending,
The soul of melancholy gentleness
Gleams like a seraph from the sky descending,
Above all pain, yet pitying all distress ;
At once such majesty with sweetness blending,
I worship more, but cannot love thee less.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

I.

TO WORDSWORTH.

POET of Nature ! thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return !
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st ; yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar :
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude.
In honored poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty : —
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

II.

POLITICAL GREATNESS.

NOR happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame ;
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
History is but the shadow of their shame ;
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts,
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
Staining that heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
By force or custom ? Man, who man would be,
Must rule the empire of himself ; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

III.

OZYMANDIAS.

I MET a traveller from an antique land,
Who said : " Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive (stamped on these lifeless things)
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed ;
And on the pedestal these words appear :—
' My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :
Look on my works, ye mighty ! and despair !'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away ! "

IV.

SONNET.

YE hasten to the dead ! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear ?
O thou quick Heart, which pantest to possess
All that anticipation feigneth fair !
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldest guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou may'st go,
And that which never yet was known wouldest know —
O, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking alike from happiness and woe
A refuge in the cavern of gray death ?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts ! What thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below ?

JOHN KEATS.

I.

“ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN’S HOMER.”

MUCH have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been,
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne ;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortes when with eagle eyes
He stared * at the Pacific — and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

* “Stared” has been thought by some too violent, but it is precisely the word required by the occasion. The Spaniard was too original and ardent a man either to look, or to affect to look, coldly superior to it. His “eagle eyes” are from life, as may be seen by Titian’s portrait of him.

II.

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET.

THE Poetry of Earth is never dead :

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,

And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run

From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead :

That is the Grasshopper's ; he takes the lead

In summer luxury ; he has never done

With his delights, for when tired out with fun,

He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The Poetry of Earth is ceasing never :

On a lone winter evening, when the frost

Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills

The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,

And seems to one in drowsiness half lost

The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

III.

ON READING "THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF" OF CHAUCER.

THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse,
The honeyed lines so freshly interlace
To keep the reader in so sweet a place ;
So that he here and there full-hearted stops ;
And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
Come cool and suddenly against his face,
And by the wandering melody may trace
Which way the tender-leggéd linnet hops.
O what a charm hath white Simplicity !
What mighty power hath this gentle story !
I, that forever feel athirst for glory,
Could at this moment be content to lie
Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

IV.

“ON LEIGH HUNT’S POEM, THE ‘STORY OF RIMINI.’”

Who loves to peer up at the morning sun,
With half-shut eyes and comfortable cheek,
Let him, with this sweet tale, full often seek
For meadows where the little rivers run;
Who loves to linger with that brightest one
Of Heaven — Hesperus — let him lowly speak
These numbers to the night, and starlight meek,
Or moon, if that her hunting be begun.
He who knows these delights, and too is prone
To moralize upon a smile or tear,
Will find at once a region of his own,
A bower for his spirit, and will steer
To alleys where the fir-tree drops its cone,
Where robins hop, and fallen leaves are sear.

V.

THE LOVER LEFT BY HIS LOVE AT EVENING.

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone !

Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hands, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semitone,

Bright eyes, accomplished shape, and lang'rous waist !
Faded the flower and all its budded charms ;

Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes ;
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms ;

Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise, —
Vanished unseasonably at shut of eve,

When the dusk holiday — or holinight —
Of fragrant-curtained love begins to weave

The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight ;
But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

VI.

ON FAME.

FAME, like a wayward girl, will still be coy
To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy,
And dotes the more upon a heart at ease :
She is a Gypsy, — will not speak to those
Who have not learnt to be content without her ;
A Jilt, whose ear was never whispered close,
Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her ;
A very Gypsy is she, Nilus-born,
Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar ;
Ye love-sick Bards ! repay her scorn for scorn ;
Ye Artists love-lorn ! madmen that ye are !
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu ;
Then if she likes it, she will follow you.

VII.

TO SLEEP.

O SOFT embalmer of the still midnight!
Shutting with careful fingers and benign
Our gloom-pleased eyes, embowered from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine,
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my head its lulling charities;
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;
Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
Its strength, for darkness burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiléd wards,
And seal the hushéd casket of my soul.

VIII.

TO J. H. REYNOLDS.

O THAT a week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warm meeting every week ;
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
The flush of welcome ever on the cheek :
So would we live long life in little space ;
So time itself would be annihilate ;
So a day's journey in oblivious haze
To serve our joys would lengthen and dilate.
O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind !
To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant !
In little time a host of joys to bind,
And keep our souls in one eternal pant ;
This morn, my friend, and yester evening taught
Me how to harbor such a happy thought.

IX.

ANSWER TO A SONNET ENDING THUS :

“ Dark eyes are dearer far
Than those that made the hyacinthine bell.”

By J. H. REYNOLDS.

BLUE ! 'T is the life of heaven, — the domain
Of Cynthia, — the wide palace of the sun, —
The tent of Hesperus, and all his train, —
The bosomer of clouds, gold, gray, and dun.
Blue ! 'T is the life of waters, — ocean,
And all its vassal streams : pools numberless
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
Subside, if not to dark blue nativeness.
Blue ! Gentle cousin of the forest green,
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers,
Forget-me-not, — the blue-bell, — and, that queen
Of secrecy, the violet ; what strange powers
Hast thou, as a mere shadow ! But how great,
When in an Eye thou art alive with fate !

X.

HIS LAST SONNET.

BRIGHT STAR! would I were steadfast as thou art!
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors:
No! yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel forever its soft fall and* swell,
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever, or else swoon to death.*

* Another reading: —

Half passionless, and so swoon on to death.

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT.

I.

QUIET EVENINGS.

(TO THOMAS BARNES, Esq.)

DEAR BARNES, whose native taste, solid and clear,
The throng of life has strengthened without harm,
You know the rural feeling, and the charm
That stillness has for a world-fretted ear :
'T is now deep whispering all about me here,
With thousand tiny hushings, like a swarm
Of atom bees, or fairies in alarm,
Or noise of numerous bliss from distant sphere.
This charm our evening hours duly restore, —
Naught heard through all our little, lulled abode,
Save the crisp fire, or leaf of book turned o'er,
Or watch-dog, or the ring of frosty road.
Wants there no other sound then ? — Yes, one more, —
The voice of friendly visiting, long owed.

II.

TO THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE CRICKET.*

GREEN little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass ;
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass ;
O sweet and tiny cousins, that belong
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine ; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts ; and both seem given to earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song, —
In doors and out, summer and winter, Mirth.

December, 1816.

* Written in the Vale of Health, Hampstead, and in companionship with that of Keats, on the same subject.

III.

TO MY WIFE.

(On Modelling my Bust.)

AH, Marian mine, the face you look on now
Is not exactly like my wedding day's ;
Sunk is its cheek, deeper-retired its gaze,
Less white and smooth its temple-flattened brow.
Sorrow has been there with his silent plough,
And strait, stern hand. No matter, if it raise
Aught that affection fancies, it may praise,
Or make me worthier of Apollo's bough.
Loss, after all, — such loss especially, —
Is transfer, change, but not extinction, — no ;
Part in our children's apple cheeks I see ;
And, for the rest, while you look at me so,
Take care you do not smile it back to me,
And miss the copied furrows as you go.

IV.

TO KOSCIUSKO.

(Who never fought either for Bonaparte or the Allies.)

'T is like thy patient valor thus to keep,
Great Kosciusko, to the rural shade,
While Freedom's ill-found amulet still is made
Pretence for old aggression, and a heap
Of selfish mockeries. There, as in the sweep
Of stormier fields, thou earnest with thy blade,
Transformed, not inly altered, to the spade,
Thy never yielding right to a calm sleep.
There came a wanderer, borne from land to land
Upon a couch, pale, many-wounded, mild,
His brow with patient pain dulcetly sour.
Men stooped with awful sweetness on his hand,
And kissed it ; and collected Virtue smiled,
To think how sovereign her enduring hour.

V.

ON A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR.

It lies before me there, and my own breath
Stirs its thin outer threads, as though beside
The living head I stood in honored pride,
Talking of lovely things that conquer death.
Perhaps he pressed it once, or underneath
Ran his fine fingers, when he leant, blank-eyed,
And saw, in fancy, Adam and his bride
With their rich locks, or his own Delphic wreath.
There seems a love in hair, though it be dead.
It is the gentlest, yet the strongest thread
Of our frail plant, — a blossom from the tree
Surviving the proud trunk ; — as though it said,
Patience and Gentleness is Power. In me
Behold affectionate eternity.

VI.

THE NILE.

IT flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands, —
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roamed through the young world, the glory ex-
treme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.
Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us ; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.

VINCENT LEIGH HUNT.

THE DEFORMED CHILD.*

AN Angel prisoned in an infant frame
Of mortal sickness and deformity,
Looks patiently from out that languid eye
Matured, and seeming large with pain. The name
Of "happy childhood" mocks his movements tame,
So propped with piteous crutch, or forced to lie
Rather than sit, in his frail chair, and try
To taste the pleasure of the unshared game.
He does ; and faintly claps his withered hands
To see how Brother Willie caught the ball ;
Kind Brother Willie, strong, yet gentle all :
'T was he that placed him where his chair now stands
In that warm corner, 'gainst the sunny wall.
God, in that brother, gave him more than lands.

* Vincent Leigh Hunt was the youngest son of Leigh Hunt, and inherited a large share of his father's poetical talents. He died when quite young. In a letter to me, Mr. Hunt thus speaks of him : "His whole life was full of sympathy. A sonnet like this will allow his father to indulge a hope, that, wherever any sonnets of his own may be thought worth collecting, they and it may never be parted." (S. A. L.)

LAMAN BLANCHARD.

I.

CREATIVENESS OF A LOVING EYE.

PLEASURES lie thickest where no pleasures seem :

There 's not a leaf that falls upon the ground

But holds some joy, of silence or of sound ;

Some sprite begotten of a summer dream.

The very meanest things are made supreme

With innate ecstasy. No grain of sand

But moves a bright and million-peopled land,

And hath its Eden and its Eves, I deem.

For Love, though blind himself, a curious eye

Hath lent me, to behold the hearts of things,

And touched mine ear with power. Thus, far or nigh,

Minute or mighty, fixed or free with wings,

Delight, from many a nameless covert sly,

Peeps sparkling, and in tones familiar sings.

II.

A WISH FOR THE UNFADINGNESS OF THE LOVING EYE.

GAYLY and greenly let my seasons run ;
 And should the war-winds of the world uproot
 The sanctities of life, and its sweet fruit
 Cast forth as fuel for the fiery sun,
 The dews be turned to ice, fair days begun
 In peace wear out in pain, and sounds that suit
 Despair and discord keep Hope's harp-strings mute,
 Still let me live as love and life were one :
 Still let me turn on earth a childlike gaze,
 And trust the whispered charities that bring
 Tidings of human truth ; with inward praise
 Watch the weak motion of each common thing,
 And find it glorious : — still let me raise
 On wintry wrecks an altar to the spring.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

I.

FIRST WORDS OF ADAM.

WHAT was 't awakened first the untried ear
Of that sole man who was all human kind?
Was it the gladsome welcome of the wind,
Stirring the leaves that never yet were sere?
The four mellifluous streams which flowed so near,
Their lulling murmurs all in one combined?
The note of bird unnamed? The startled hind
Bursting the brake, in wonder, not in fear,
Of her new lord? Or did the holy ground
Send forth mysterious melody to greet
The gracious pressure of immaculate feet?
Did viewless seraphs rustle all around,
Making sweet music out of air as sweet?
Or his own voice awake him with its sound?

II.

SONNET TO A FRIEND.

WE parted on the mountains, as two streams
From one clear spring pursue their several ways ;
And thy fleet course hath been through many a maze
In foreign lands, where silvery Padus gleams
To that delicious sky, whose glowing beams
Brightened the tresses that old poets praise ;
Where Petrarch's patient love and artful lays,
And Ariosto's song of many themes,
Moved the soft air. But I, a lazy brook,
As close pent up within my native dell,
Have crept along from nook to shady nook,
Where flow'rets blow, and whispering Naiads dwell.
Yet now we meet, that parted were so wide,
O'er rough and smooth to travel side by side.

III.

LONG time a child, and still a child, when years

Had painted manhood on my cheek, was I ;

For yet I lived like one not born to die :

A thriftless prodigal of smiles and tears,

No hope I needed, and I knew no fears.

But sleep, though sweet, is only sleep ; and waking,

I waked to sleep no more ; at once o'ertaking

The vanguard of my age, with all arrears

Of duty on my back. — Nor child, nor man,

Nor youth, nor sage, I find my head is gray,

For I have lost the race I never ran ;

A rathe December blights my lagging May ;

And still I am a child, though I be old :

Time is my debtor for my years untold.

IV.

MAY-TIME IN ENGLAND.

(1832.)

Is this the merry May of tale and song?
Chill breathes the north, the sky looks chilly blue,
The waters wear a cold and iron hue,
Or wrinkle as the crisp wave creeps along,
Much like an ague-fit. The starry throng
Of flow'rets droop, o'erdone with drenching dew,
Or close their leaves at noon, as if they knew
And felt, in helpless wrath, the season's wrong.
Yet in the half-clad woods, the busy birds
Chirping with all their might to keep them warm,
The young hare flitting from her ferny form,
The vernal lowing of the amorous herds,
And swelling buds, impatient of delay,
Declare it should be, though it is not, May.

V.

SECOND NUPTIALS.

THERE is no jealousy in realms above :
The spirit, purified from earthly stain,
And knowing that its earthly loss was gain,
Transfers its property in earthly love
(Though love it was she does not yet reprove)
To her by Heaven appointed to sustain
The honored matron's part ; to bear the pain,
The joy, the duty, all things that behoove
A Christian wedded. She that dwells on high
May be a guardian angel to the wife
That her good husband chooses to supply
Her place, vacated in the noon of life ;
With holy gladness may support the bride
Through happy cares, to her by death denied.

VI.

A PREMATURE OLD BACHELOR, HE CONGRATULATES A
BRIDEGROOM.

How shall a man foredoomed to lone estate,
Untimely old, irreverently gray,
Much like a patch of dusky snow in May,
Dead sleeping in a hollow, all too late, —
How shall so poor a thing congratulate
The best completion of a patient wooing,
Or how commend a younger man for doing
What ne'er to do hath been his fault, or fate ?
There is a fable, that I once did read,
Of a 'bad angel that was someway good,
And therefore on the brink of Heaven he stood,
Looking each way, and no way could proceed ;
Till at the last he purged away his sin,
By loving all the joy he saw within.

MRS. FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS.

I.

THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.

FLOWERS! — when the Saviour's calm, benignant eye
Fell on your gentle beauty, — when from you
That heavenly lesson for all hearts he drew,
Eternal, universal, as the sky, —
Then, in the bosom of your purity,
A voice he set, as in a temple-shrine,
That life's quick travellers ne'er might pass you by
Unwarned of that sweet oracle divine.
And though too oft its low, celestial sound,
By the harsh notes of work-day Care is drowned,
And the loud steps of vain unlistening Haste,
Yet the great ocean hath no tone of power
Mightier to reach the soul, in thought's hushed hour,
Than yours, ye Lilies! chosen thus and graced!

II.

A VERNAL THOUGHT.

O FESTAL Spring! 'midst thy victorious glow,
Far-spreading o'er the kindled woods and plains,
And streams that bound to meet thee from thy chains,
Well might there lurk the shadow of a woe
For human hearts, and in the exulting flow
Of thy rich songs a melancholy tone,
Were we of mould all earthly; *we* alone,
Severed from thy great spell, and doomed to go
Farther, still farther, from our sunny time,
Never to feel the breathings of our prime,
Never to flower again! — But we, O Spring!
Cheered by deep whispers not of earth,
Press to the regions of thy heavenly birth,
As here thy flowers and birds press on to bloom and sing.

III.

FLOWERS.

WELCOME, O pure and lovely forms, again
Unto the shadowy stillness of my room !
For not alone ye bring a joyous train
Of summer-thoughts attendant on your bloom, —
Visions of freshness, of rich bowery gloom,
Of the low murmurs filling mossy dells,
Of stars that look down on your folded bells
Through dewy leaves, of many a wild perfume,
Greeting the wanderer of the hill and grove
Like sudden music ; more than this ye bring —
Far more ; ye whisper of the all-fostering love
Which thus hath clothed you, and whose dove-like wing
Broods o'er the sufferer drawing fevered breath,
Whether the couch be that of life or death.

IV.

THE TWILIGHT HOUR.*

I LOVE to hail the mild and balmy hour,
When evening spreads around her twilight veil ;
When dew's descend on every languid flower,
And sweet and tranquil is the summer gale.
Then let me wander by the peaceful tide,
While o'er the wave the breezes lightly play ;
To hear the waters murmur as they glide,
To mark the fading smile of closing day.
There let me linger, blest in visions dear,
Till the soft moonbeams tremble on the seas ;
While melting sounds decay on fancy's ear,
Of airy music floating on the breeze.
For still when evening sheds the genial dew,
That pensive hour is sacred to the muse.

* Written at the age of thirteen.

V.

SABBATH SONNET.

(Composed a few days before her death, and dedicated to her brother.)

How many blessed groups this hour are bending,
Through England's primrose meadow-paths, their way
Towards spire and tower, 'midst shadowy elms ascending,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallowed day !
The halls from old heroic ages gray
Pour their fair children forth ; and hamlets low,
With whose thick orchard-blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a freed vernal stream. I may not tread
With them those pathways, — to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound ; — yet, O my God ! I bless
Thy mercy, that with Sabbath peace hath filled
My chastened heart, and all its throbbings stilled
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness !

THOMAS HOOD.*

I.

WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF SHAKESPEARE.

How bravely Autumn paints upon the sky
The gorgeous fame of Summer which is fled !
Hues of all flowers that in their ashes lie,
Trophied in that fair light whereon they fed, —
Tulip, and hyacinth, and sweet rose red, —
Like exhalations from the leafy mould.
Look here how honor glorifies the dead,
And warms their scutcheons with a glance of gold ! —
Such is the memory of poets old,
Who on Parnassus' hill have bloomed elate ;
Now they are laid under their marbles cold,
And turned to clay, whereof they were create ;
But God Apollo hath them all enrolled,
And blazoned on the very clouds of fate !

II.

TO FANCY.

Most delicate Ariel ! submissive thing,
Won by the mind's high magic to its hest,
Invisible embassy, or secret guest,
Weighing the light air on a lighter wing ; —
Whether into the midnight moon, to bring
Illuminate visions to the eye of rest,
Or rich romances from the florid West,
Or to the sea, for mystic whispering, —
Still by thy charmed allegiance to the will,
The fruitful wishes prosper in the brain,
As by the fingering of fairy skill, —
Moonlight, and waters, and soft music's strain,
Odors, and blooms, and *my* Miranda's smile,
Making this dull world an enchanted isle.

III.

TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

O, 'T is a touching thing to make one weep, —
A tender infant with its curtained eye,
Breathing as it would neither live nor die,
With that unchanging countenance of sleep !
As if its silent dream, serene and deep,
Had lined its slumber with a still blue sky,
So that the passive cheeks unconscious lie
With no more life than roses, — just to keep
The blushes warm, and the mild, odorous breath.
O blossom boy ! so calm is thy repose,
So sweet a compromise of life and death,
'T is pity those fair buds should e'er uncloze
For memory to stain their inward leaf,
Tinging thy dreams with unacquainted grief.

IV.

TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

THINE eyelids slept so beauteously, I deemed
No eyes could wake so beautiful as they ;
Thy rosy cheeks in such still slumbers lay,
I loved their peacefulness, nor ever dreamed
Of dimples : — for those parted lips so seemed,
I never thought a smile could sweetlier play,
Nor that so graceful life could chase away
Thy graceful death, — till those blue eyes upheaved.
Now slumber lies in dimpled eddies drowned,
And roses bloom more rosily for joy,
And odorous silence ripens into sound,
And fingers move to sound. — All-beauteous boy !
How dost thou waken into smiles, and prove,
If not more lovely, thou art more like Love !

V.

DEATH.

It is not death, that some time in a sigh
This eloquent breath shall take its speechless flight ;
That some time these bright stars, that now reply
In sunlight to the sun, shall set in night ;
That this warm conscious flesh shall perish quite,
And all life's ruddy springs forget to flow ;
That thoughts shall cease, and the immortal spright
Be lapped in alien clay and laid below ;
It is not death to know this, — but to know
That pious thoughts, which visit at new graves
In tender pilgrimage, will cease to go
So duly and so oft ; — and when grass waves
Over the past-away, there may be then
No resurrection in the minds of men.

VI.

LOVE.

Love, dearest Lady, such as I would speak,
Lives not within the humor of the eye ;—
Not being but an outward phantasy,
That skims the surface of a tinted cheek.
Else it would wane with beauty, and grow weak, —
As if the rose made summer, — and so lie
Amongst the perishable things that die,
Unlike the love which I would give and seek,
Whose health is of no hue to feel decay
With cheeks' decay, that have a rosy prime.
Love is its own great loveliness always,
And takes new lustre from the touch of time ;
Its bough owns no December and no May,
But bears its blossom into Winter's clime.

BRYAN WALLER PROCTER.

I.

SPRING.

It is not that sweet herbs and flowers alone
Start up, like spirits that have lain asleep
In their great mother's icéd bosom deep,
For months ; or that the birds, more joyous grown,
Catch once again their silver summer tone ;
And they who late from bough to bough did creep,
Now trim their plumes upon some sunny steep,
And seem to sing of Winter overthrown.
No : — with an equal march, the immortal mind,
As though it never would be left behind,
Keeps pace with every movement of the year ;
And (for high truths are born in happiness)
As the warm heart expands, the eye grows clear,
And sees beyond the slave's or bigot's guess.

II.

A STILL PLACE.

UNDER what beechen shade or silent oak
Lies the mute sylvan now, mysterious Pan?
Once, (while rich Peneus and Ilissus ran
Clear from their fountains,) as the morning broke,
'T is said the Satyr with Apollo spoke,
And to harmonious strife with his wild reed
Challenged the god, whose music was indeed
Divine, and fit for heaven. Each played, and woke
Beautiful sounds to life, — deep melodies ;
One blew his pastoral pipe with such nice care
That flocks and birds all answered him ; and one
Shook his immortal showers upon the air.
That music hath ascended to the sun ;
But where the other ? Speak, ye dells and trees !

III.

TO ADELAIDE.

CHILD of my heart ! my sweet beloved First-Born !

Thou dove, who tidings bring'st of calmer hours !

Thou rainbow, who dost shine when all the showers

Are past, — or passing ! Rose, which hath no thorn,

No spot, no blemish, — pure, and unforlorn !

Untouched, untainted ! O, my Flower of flowers !

More welcome than to bees are summer bowers,

To stranded seamen life-assuring morn !

Welcomes, — a thousand welcomes ! Care, who clings

Round all, seems loosening now his serpent fold,

New hope springs upward, and the bright world seems

Cast back into a youth of endless springs !

Sweet mother, is it so ? — or, grow I old,

Bewildered in divine Elysian dreams ?

IV.

TO EDITH. — 1845.

LIKE thy first Sister, when her years were few,
And Nature through her gentlest instinct taught,
(Till Time the Soul's bright pinions outward drew,
And Reason with Imagination wrought,)
Mayst thou take note — as a good child should do —
Of all things best in her, of deed and thought :
Mayst thou be prudent, wise, sweet-tempered, true,
Trustful, but by no specious error caught ;
God bless thee ! May thy blameless life be hung
With garlands of delight ! May Peace, the dove,
Dwell in thine heart through long and prosperous days !
May Truth e'er warn thee with an Angel's tongue !
May Earth's best children meet thy love with love ;
And Heaven smile on thee in a thousand ways !

WILLIAM HENRY WHITWORTH.

I.

THE PYRAMIDS.

WHENCE and what are ye, or what have ye been ?
So the dwarfed pilgrim of the desert sand
Cries, wondering. On Eternity's lone strand,
Unwept by Time's dark waters, they are seen
(Each like that giant old of hoar Cyllene
Who propped the starry axle with his hand)
The Caryatides of Heaven, to stand
In calm and noiseless majesty serene.
Ah ! not the minions of an idol fane,
But monuments of Hope, ye tower sublime,
To show despairing man his soul shall reign
Immortal, in some bright and glorious clime,
If thus the labors of his hand remain
Triumphant over Death, and Fate, and Time !

II.

NIPPED BUDS BETTER THAN LATER DISAPPOINTMENTS.

WHO wishes the wild wind to blow, nor grieves
To see spring buds of promise falling down,
As brief as they are fair, before the brown
And faded wreaths the last year's tempest leaves?
There had the small birds on long summer eves
Sung, careless how sere Autumn, with his crown
Of amber beads and saffron-colored gown,
The widowed woods of all their bloom bereaves.
Yet are the happiest of the happy they
(Did they but know their happiness) who go
Before our hopes, those flowers of life, decay.
They rest as soft and silent as the snow
By the sea-shore on some calm winter's day :
Alas ! who would not wish the wind to blow !

THOMAS DOUBLEDAY.

I.

THE POET'S SOLITUDE.

THINK not the Poet's life — although his cell
Be seldom printed by the stranger's feet —
Hath not its silent plenitude of sweet :
Look at yon lone and solitary dell ;
The stream that loiters 'mid its stones can tell
What flowerets its unnoted waters meet,
What odors o'er its narrow margin fleet ;
Ay, and the Poet can repeat as well ; —
The foxglove, closing inly, like a shell ;
The hyacinth ; the rose, of buds the chief ;
The thorn, bediamonded with dewy showers ;
The thyme's wild fragrance, and the heather bell ;
All, all are there. So vain is the belief
That the sequestered path has fewest flowers.

II.

LIFE.

COME, track with me this little vagrant rill,
Wandering its wild course from the mountain's breast ;
Now with a brink fantastic, heather-drest,
And playing with the stooping flowers at will ;
Now moving scarce, with noiseless step and still :
Anon, it seems to weary of its rest,
And hurries on, leaping with sparkling zest
Adown the ledges of the broken hill.
So let us live. Is not the life well-spent
Which loves the lot that kindly Nature weaves
For all inheriting or adorning Earth ?
Which throws light pleasure over true content,
Blossoms with fruitage, flowers as well as leaves,
And sweetens wisdom with a taste of mirth.

WILLIAM GREEN.

I.

A SULTRY SUMMER AFTERNOON.

FAR off the rook, tired by the midday beam,
Caws lazily this summer afternoon ;
The butterflies, with wandering up and down
O'er flower-bright marsh and meadow, wearied seem ;
With vacant gaze, lost in a waking dream,
We, listless, on the busy insects pore,
In rapid dance uncertain, darting o'er
The smooth-spread surface of the tepid stream.
The air is slothful, and will scarce convey
Soft sounds of idle waters to the ear :
In brightly-dim obscurity appear
The distant hills which skirt the landscape gay ;
While restless fancy owns th' unnerving sway
In visions often changed, but nothing clear.

II.

MELODY AND HARMONY.

MUSIC, high maid, at first, essaying, drew
Rude sketches for the ear ; till, with skilled hand
She traced the flowing outline, simply grand
In varied groups to grace and nature true ;
And this was MELODY. Her knowledge grew,
And, more to finish, as her powers expand,
Those beauteous draughts, a noble scheme she planned,
And o'er the whole a glow of coloring threw, —
Evening's rich painting on a pencilled sky, —
Tints that with sweet accord bewitch the sense ;
'T was HARMONY. The common crowd that press
Around prefer the charms these hues dispense,
As they chance-mingled on the palette lie,
To her white forms of undecked loveliness.

III.

GENTLE GREATNESS UNDERVALUED, TILL LOST.

FROM the unbarring to the shut of day,
Ay, ofttimes restless in the midnight blind,
His loss I mourn ; it lies upon my mind
Like a thick mist that will not clear away,
But bodes, and brings, grief's showers. His was a sway
Of soul so gentle, we alone might *find*,
Not *see* its strength ; a wit, that, ever kind,
Would spare the humbled in its freest play ;—
A silent, boastless stream, smooth, clear, but deep ;—
His mighty powers attired themselves so plain
They drew no worship though they won the heart :
Now he is gone, we waken from the sleep ;
But, as of visiting gods the poets feign,
We knew him not, till turning to depart.

CHARLES STRONG.

I.

My window's open to the evening sky,
The solemn trees are fringed with golden light,
The lawn here shadowed lies, there kindles bright,
And cherished roses lift their incense high :
The punctual thrush, on plane-tree warbling nigh,
With loud and luscious voice calls down the night ;
Dim waters, flowing on with gentle might,
Between each pause are heard to murmur by.
The book that told of wars in holy land
(Nor less than Tasso sounded in mine ears)
Escapes unheeded from my listless hand.
Poets, whom Nature for her service rears,
Like priests in her great temple minist'ring stand,
But in her glory fade when she appears.

II.

SUNRISE AT SEA, ON A SOUTHERN MISTY MORNING.

ROUSED by the billows' melancholy dirge,
I woke, as Night her sable banner furled ;
What time pale mists, in forms fantastic curled,
Like spectral shapes, come flitting o'er the surge :
Then, looking eastward, o'er the ocean's verge,
From the near sun I saw red flashes hurled,
As rolls the pageant from the nether world,
And from the waves the golden wheels emerge.
Never of old did more portentous light
Suspend the seaman's oar, when, like a pyre,
Lemnos appeared at evening, kindling bright ;
Rather — when tasked by Jove, in sudden ire,
The god was laboring with his crew all night,
On glowing anvils shaping forkéd fire.

III.

A MOMENT OF DREAD IN MODERN POMPEII.

I NEVER with such horror stood aghast,
As when, in lone Pompeii's silent street,
I felt thy mighty pulse, Vesuvius, beat,
And from thy jaws saw burst the fiery blast.
Thunders were loud, and smoke in columns vast
Mantled the air with darkness, and strange heat
Warned the sad peasant from his vine-clad seat,
As down the fruitful slope the red stream passed.
I feared lest might return that dreadful hour,
When to their gods for help the people ran,
And there was none, in temple, nor in tower :
And to my vision came the enthusiast man,
Who perished in the breath of that foul shower,
Nature's dread secrets obstinate to scan.*

* The elder Pliny.

IV.

LOVELY COMPANIONSHIP.

SHE grieved that her loved season's pensive hue,
Its colors sadly gay, so soon should fade,
And she not seek, in thoughtful mood, the glade,
Nor from gray steep the mellow landscape view :
Others too grieved, that one so fond, so true,
Marked not with them each sudden gleam and shade,
The leaf's light fall, the stillness deeper made
By rustling breeze, or bird forlorn and few.
O pure delight, when minds are well agreed,
To commune thus with WOMAN ! — early taught
In Nature's page devotedly to read, —
Lady, with *thee* ! who in thy vernal hour,
Like some heaven-favored plant, art richly fraught
With Wisdom's golden fruit and Beauty's flower.

RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH.

I.

ENJOY THE PRESENT.

WE live not in our moments or our years ;
The Present we fling from us like the rind
Of some sweet Future, which we after find
Bitter to taste ; or bind *that* in with fears,
And water it beforehand with our tears,
Vain tears for that which never may arrive.
Meanwhile, the joy whereby we ought to live,
Neglected, or unheeded, disappears.
Wiser it were to welcome and make ours
Whate'er of good, though small, the Present brings, —
Kind greetings, sunshine, song of birds, and flowers,
With a child's pure delight in little things ;
And of the griefs unborn to rest secure,
Knowing that Mercy ever will endure.

I.

TO NICHOLAS, EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.

(ON HIS REPORTED CONDUCT TOWARDS THE POLES.)

WHAT would it help to call thee what thou art?
When all is spoken, thou remainest still
With the same power, and the same evil will
To crush a nation's life out ; to dispart
All holiest ties ; to turn awry and thwart
All courses that kind Nature keeps ; to spill
The blood of noblest veins ; to maim, or kill
With torture of slow pain, the aching heart.
When our weak hands hang useless, and we feel
Deeds cannot be, who then would ease his breast
With the impotence of words? But our appeal
Is unto Him who counts a nation's tears ;
With whom are the oppressor and opprest,
And vengeance, and the recompensing years.

III.

TO SILVIO PELLICO.

(ON READING THE ACCOUNT OF HIS IMPRISONMENT.)

AH ! who may guess, who yet was never tried,
How fearful the temptation to reply
With wrong for wrong ; yea, fiercely to defy
In spirit, even where action is denied ?
Therefore praise waits on thee, not drawn aside
By this strong lure of hell ; on thee, whose eye,
Being formed by love, could everywhere descry
Love, or some workings unto love allied ;
And benediction on the grace that dealt
So with thy soul ; and prayer, more earnest prayer,
Intenser longing than before we felt,
For all that in dark places lying are ;
For captives in strange lands ; for them who pine
In depth of dungeon, or in sunless mine.

SIR JOHN HANMER.

I.

AMERICA.

GREAT people, whom across the Atlantic seas,
Our thoughts, expanding with the space, behold ;
And know thy starry front, serene and bold,
E'en as Orion, when the winters freeze ;
Thy distance fades by changing moon's degrees ;
Peace hovers o'er the middle depths, to hold
On either side her scales of antique gold,
Spanning the depths : but not alone for these ;
But, that ye come from an ancestral line
That hence departed, keeping freedom's ways,
And speak the language that the band divine
And storied memories of great deeds did raise,
When the old world was wondrous ; let the sign
Of love shine out betwixt us, in our days.

II.

PETRARCA.

NOT vainly didst thou sing thy lifetime long,
Petrarca, of a fair and gentle dame ;
And with the winds fan love's enduring flame,
Wandering the hills and the quick streams among ;
For Time hath listened to thy passionate song ;
Whose years like pilgrims to Valchiusa came.
Sighing thou wentest all thy days ; but Fame
Filled her clear trump with thine imagined wrong ;
Then from the banks of that Provençal river,
Soared loftier accents, 'neath the Alps' blue gleam ;
And at thy voice rose one who would deliver
His Rome and thine ; O noble poet-dream !
The Belisarian weeds did stir and shiver
On her old walls at that electric theme.

III.

THE STEAMBOAT.

WHITE wings, that o'er the hyacinthine sea
With joy or hope or sorrow long have sped ;
Since first he voyaged whom the Colchian wed,
Bearing lone ships o'er many a salt degree ;
A voice came thence, where ye were wont to be,
A strange and serpent utterance ; high o'erhead
Trailed its dark breath ; and with Ixion's tread
A keel passed by, mocking the stormy lee.
Into the rack, far lessening, on it went,
As once that antique lover of the cloud ;
While ye to veering winds were bowed and bent ;
And Ocean roared with his great voice aloud,
Lashing his waves 'gainst isle and continent,
Vexed with the wake that wheel-borne ship had ploughed.

IV.

THE PINE WOODS.

WE stand upon the Moorish mountain-side,
From age to age, a solemn company ;
There are no voices in our paths, but we
Hear the great whirlwinds roaring loud and wide,
And like the sea-waves have our boughs replied,
From the beginning, to their stormy glee ;
The thunder rolls above us, and some tree
Smites with his bolt ; yet doth the race abide,
Answering all times ; but joyous, when the sun
Glints on the peaks that clouds no longer bear ;
And the young shoots to flourish have begun ;
And the quick seeds through the blue odorous air
From the expanding cones fall one by one ;
And silence, as in temples, dwelleth there.

V.

SINGING-BIRDS.

SWEET is thy voice, embowered Nightingale,
But for thy praise would fail my weaker song ;
Sweet all thy airy kindred, that belong
To Nature's happiest haunts, by field or vale ;
And some there are, that, in the shadows pale
Of cavernous dim towns, make yearn the throng ;
Prisoners are they, and blind, yet seems more strong
The melody of their lives' remembered tale.
Ye are the accepted poets : wheresoe'er
Your notes have sounded, joy hath thither come,
As flowers to forest wells, serene and clear :
Fame wears ye not, that eats the hearts of some :
Those unambitious accents man doth hear,
And straight the importunate voice of self is done.

VI.

ART.

As o'er the sea's deep world-sustaining breast,
Climbing the steep horizon, onward bear
The thought-winged ships, and each his track more fair
Believes, for 't is his own, than all the rest ;
Which not the less doth fade, as 't is imprest ;
And the great waters, and cloud-traversed air,
With their enduring might, are only there,
And space of days unmeasured, east and west :
Dread realms of Art, illimitable as ocean,
So fares man's spirit o'er your region waves,
Proudly and lonely, with a choral motion ;
Sunshine he courts, but tempests too he braves ;
Seeking the port, where, for their heart's devotion,
Fame lights her star over such seamen's graves.

VII.

CHAUCER.

WHEN I remember how, nor separate chance,
Nor restless traffic, peopling many a shore,
Nor old tradition with innumerable lore,
But poets wrought our best inheritance,
Sweet words and noble, in their *gay science*
That England heard, and then forevermore
Loved as her own, and did with deeds adore ;
I bless thee with a kindred heart, Provence :
For to thy tales, like waves that come and go,
Sat Chaucer listening with exulting ear,
And casting his own phrase in giant mould,
That still had charms for sorrow's gentlest tear
Telling the story of Griselda's woe,
" Under the roots of Vesulus the cold."

VIII.

THE MERCHANT.

NAKED wast thou, at thy birth-time, utterly,
Merchant whose sails are furl'd ; and now the birds
Build under thy broad cornices, and the herds
Sleep in the shadow of thy planted tree ;
The waves have borne thee onward ; thou mayst see
The stars in new perspective ; the full thirds
Of thy great wealth no more are inky words,
Paper and trust, but woods and swelling lea.
Then wilt thou keep the balance in thine house,
Emblem of just signiory, and the cause ?
Or with those harlequin heralds poorly feign ?
Keep it ; for noble citizenship thus,
And truth, the fountain that doth never pause,
Free from the weeds of folly thou wilt maintain.

HENRY ALFORD.

RISE, said the Master, come unto the feast :
She heard the call, and rose with willing feet ;
But thinking it not otherwise than meet
For such a bidding to put on her best,
She is gone from us for a few short hours
Into her bridal closet, there to wait
For the unfolding of the palace gate
That gives her entrance to the blissful bowers.
We have not seen her yet, though we have been
Full often to her chamber door, and oft
Have listened underneath the postern green,
And laid fresh flowers, and whispered short and soft :
But she hath made no answer ; and the day
From the clear west is fading fast away.

ARTHUR BROOKE.

RESIGNATION.

IF from the chaos of my youthful fate
Have been shaped out some elements of rest ;
If, beyond hope, the madness of my breast
Hath felt at least its paroxysms abate,
Leaving my heart next wholly desolate ;
If, in my brain, where, like a spirit unblest,
Thought long was racked, now peace can claim a nest,
In halcyon hours, to musing consecrate ;
Throned on composure, if the soul thus reigns,
Suffering no hopes to allure, no dreams to abuse,
But, o'er the wreck of perished joys and pains,
Calmly contemplative its course pursues,
Strong, self-possessed, — 't is not from what it gains,
But what it can resign, such power accrues.

EDMUND PEEL.

I.

TO THE RIVER TEES.

TEES ! if the wells we draw from shed no light,
 Thou hast a voice to gladden thy green dale,
Till the rocks founder and the mountains fail.
Plunge, and roll on, in full harmonious might,
Based on primeval adamantine right !
 Wind out, and reach, and murmur down the vale ;
 Or in a torrent, white as stony hail,
 Strike the deep caves of thunder, black as night,
Whose walls stand fast forever ! What am I
 Thy depths to fathom, or to wield thy force,
 Or of thy shoals to babble, Various One ?
We came alike from yonder equal sky.
 Could I but run thy clear and sonorous course,
 Rejoicing thousands, disappointing none !

II.

ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE.

To save the soul, to purchase Paradise,
By voluntary woe and wilful pain,
Tried in all ages, still is tried in vain.
The wheels of Juggernaut crush out the cries
Of hideous unavailing sacrifice,
As when to Moloch reeked the bloody plain !
As when the fire-devoted shrieked amain !
As when lean agony, in lowly guise,
Groaned on the lofty pillar ! — Better pray
For light, than hold a taper unapproved, —
Than give a wrong direction to the blind !
Elijah laughed to scorn the frantic bray
And the red gashes, which to frenzy moved
Zeal without knowledge, plaguing human kind.

III.

TO WINTER.

THOU of the snowy vest and frosted hair,
With icicles down-hanging, Winter, hail !
Never be mine against a power to rail
Ancient as Night ! to deem thee void and bare,
Cousin of Death, twin-brother of Despair !
Rather shall praises in my song prevail,
Praises of Him who gives us to inhale
The freshness of the uninfected air.
So long as I behold the clear blue sky,
The carol of the robin-redbreast hear,
And o'er the frozen waters seem to fly ;
Or, softly cushioned, while the fire burns clear,
Bask in the light of a beloved eye,
So long, O Winter ! to my soul be dear.

SIR AUBREY DE VERE.

I.

TIME MISSPENT.*

THERE is no remedy for time misspent ;
No healing for the waste of idleness,
Whose very languor is a punishment
Heavier than active souls can feel or guess.
O hours of indolence and discontent,
Not now to be redeemed ! ye sting not less,
Because I know this span of life was lent
For lofty duties, not for selfishness.
Not to be whiled away in aimless dreams,
But to improve ourselves, and serve mankind,
Life and its choicest faculties were given.
Man should be ever better than he seems ;
And shape his acts, and discipline his mind,
To walk, adorning earth, with hope of heaven.

* From "A Song of Faith, Devout Exercises, and Sonnets, by Sir Aubrey de Vere, Bart., 1842."

II.

ORIGIN OF THE SOUL.

It cannot be that by traduction come
Our souls, like growth of the corporeal frame :
This earth is to the flesh a natural home ;
But spirit is of heaven, from whence it came,
And tends aspiring, — an ethereal flame,
Sacred, as are the fires of martyrdom !
All else is mystery. We hear a name,
But meet no phantom risen from the tomb.
What shall we think then? Ere this world was born,
Were souls, countless as beams of stellar light,
Called forth? or as our flesh demands? The night
Of childhood, and man's meditative morn,
Thrill with vague memories ; and blind impulse brings
Shadows perplexed of pre-existing things !

III.

THE OPENING OF THE TOMB OF CHARLEMAGNE.

AMID the cloistered gloom of Aachen's aisle
Stood Otho, Germany's imperial lord,
Regarding, with a melancholy smile,
A simple stone, where, fitly to record
A world of action by a single word,
Was graven "Carlo-Magno." Regal style
Was needed none ; that name such thoughts restored
As sadden, yet make nobler, men the while.
They rolled the marble back. With sudden gasp,
A moment o'er the vault the Kaiser bent,
Where still a mortal monarch seemed to reign.
Crowned on his throne, a sceptre in his grasp,
Perfect in each gigantic lineament,
Otho looked face to face on Charlemagne.

IV.

DIOCLETIAN AT SALONA.

TAKE back these vain insignia of command,
Crown, truncheon, golden eagle, bawbles all,
And robe of Tyrian dye, to me a pall ;
And be forever alien to my hand,
Though laurel-wreathed, War's desolating brand.
I would have friends, not courtiers, in my hall ;
Wise books, learn'd converse, beauty free from thrall,
And leisure for good deeds, thoughtfully planned.
Farewell, thou garish World ! thou Italy,
False widow of departed Liberty !
I scorn thy base caresses. Welcome the roll,
Between us, of mine own bright Adrian sea !
Welcome these wilds, from whose bold heights my soul
Looks down on your degenerate Capitol !

V.

QUEEN ELIZABETH.

THE lioness that stalks the forest bound
More awful in her presence and her port
Looked not than she : high in her cloudy court
The rock-throned osprey, glancing sternly round
Through sun-lit air unshaken by a sound,
From low desires and the base world's resort
Seemed elevated less : the dolphin's sport
O'er foam-flecked waves and sapphire depths profound
Showed not a pageant to the eye of morn
More bright. Her thoughts were in the purple born ;
Her eye was empery ; she gave the nod,
And all obeyed ; all earthly powers with scorn
She noted ; yea, the fane itself she trod
As though she were the sister of a god !

DAVID LESTER RICHARDSON.

I.

TO MY TWIN BOYS.*

YE seem not, sweet ones, formed for human care ;
Your dreams are tinged by heaven ; your glad eyes
meet
A charm in every scene ; for all things greet
The dawn of life with hues divinely fair.
How brightly yet your laughing features wear
The bloom of early joy ! Your bosoms beat
With no bewildering fear ; your cup is sweet ;
The manna of delight is melting there.
Twin buds of life and love ! my hope and pride !
Fair priceless jewels of a father's heart !
Stars of my home ! No saddening shadows hide
Your beauty now. Your stainless years depart
Like glittering streams that softly murmur by,
Or white-winged birds that pierce the sunny sky.

* "Literary Leaves ; or, Prose and Verse, by D. L. Richardson. Calcutta, 1836."

II.

FINE WEATHER AT SEA.

THE plain of ocean 'neath the crystal air
Its azure bound extends ; the circle wide
Is sharply clear ; contrasted hues divide
The sky and water. Clouds, like hills that wear
The winter's snow-wrought mantle, brightly fair,
Rest on the main's blue marge. As shadows glide
O'er dew-decked fields, the calm ship seems to slide
O'er glassy paths that catch the noontide glare,
As if bestrewn with diamonds. Quickly play
The small crisp waves, that musically break
Their shining peaks. And now, if aught can make
Celestial spirits wing their downward way,
Methinks they glitter in the proud sun's wake,
And breathe a glorious beauty on the day.

III.

A CALM AFTER A GALE.

THE mountain mists now roll on sultry airs ;
Unheard and slow the huge waves heave around,
That lately roared in wrath. The storm-fiend, bound
Within his unseen cave, no longer tears
The vexed and wearied main. The moon appears,
Uncurtaining wide her azure realms profound
To cheer the sullen night. Though not a sound
Reposing Nature breathes, my rapt soul hears
The far-off murmur of my native streams,
Like music from the stars. The silver tone
Is memory's lingering echo. Ocean's zone
Infolds me from the past. This small bark seems
The centre of the world, — an island lone ;
And love's dear forms are like departed dreams.

IV.

EVENING AT SEA.

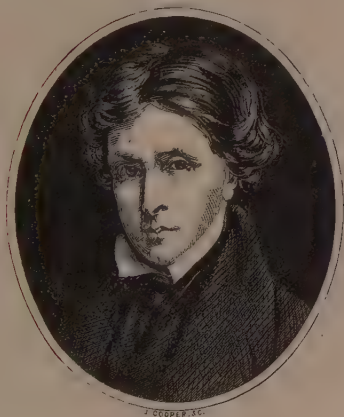
How calm and beautiful ! The broad sun now
Behind its rosy curtain lingering stays ;
Yet, downward and above, the glorious rays
Pierce the blue flood, and in the warm air glow,
While clouds from either side, like pillars, throw
Their long gigantic shadows o'er the main ; —
Between their dusky bounds, like golden rain,
Though still the sunbeams on the waves below
A shower of radiance shed, the misty veil
Of twilight spreads around ; the orient sky
Is mingling with the sea ; the distant sail
Hangs like a dim-discovered cloud on high,
And faintly bears the cold, unearthly ray,
Of yon pale moon, that seems the ghost of day.

END OF VOL. I.

THE BOOK
OF
THE SONNET

EDITED BY
LEIGH HUNT and S. ADAMS LEE

VOL. II.



BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS
1878

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1866, by
ROBERTS BROTHERS,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

UNIVERSITY PRESS : WELCH, BIGELOW, & Co.,
CAMBRIDGE.



CONTENTS OF VOL. II.



ENGLISH SONNETS. — (*Continued.*)

HENRY ELLISON	3
EGERTON WEBBE	9
RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES, LORD HOUGHTON . . .	10
THOMAS WADE	14
THOMAS JAMES JUDKIN	18
GEORGE POWELL THOMAS	22
GEORGE JAMES DE WILDE	27
JOHN WATSON DALBY	31
ALFRED TENNYSON	38
CHARLES TENNYSON	41
FREDERICK TENNYSON	47
AUBREY THOMAS DE VERE	53
EDMUND OLLIER	62
HON. MRS. NORTON	67
MRS. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING	69
DAVID GRAY	84
ALEXANDER SMITH	91
WILLIAM ALLINGHAM	94
JAMES DODDS.	97

JOHN HUNTER	98
JOHN STUART BLACKIE.	102

AMERICAN SONNETS.

COLONEL DAVID HUMPHREYS	113
RICHARD BINGHAM DAVIS	115
ROBERT TREAT PAINE	118
WASHINGTON ALLSTON	123
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT	128
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW	132
JAMES GATES PERCIVAL	136
JONES VERY	140
GEORGE HILL	144
PARK BENJAMIN	146
HENRY THEODORE TUCKERMAN	156
WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS	165
WILLIAM HENRY BURLEIGH	169
JAMES DIXON	171
REV. NORMAN PINNEY	176
HUGH PETERS	178
GEORGE HENRY BOKER	180
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL	192
RICHARD HENRY WILDE	196
JOHN HOWARD BRYANT	198
GEORGE HENRY CALVERT	200
NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS	202

WILLIAM HENRY CUYERL HOSMER	204
EPES SARGENT	206
JAMES BAYARD TAYLOR	209
RICHARD HENRY STODDARD	214
EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN	220
THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH	224
PAUL H. HAYNE	228
THOMAS BUCHANAN READ	238
SONNETS TO WINTER.	
JOHN R. THOMPSON	242
JOHN ESTEN COOKE	243
HENRY TIMROD	246
WILLIAM H. TIMROD	252
JOHN GODFREY SAXE	254
JOHN R. TAIT	256
JOHN JAMES PIATT	261
C. E. DA PONTE	262
H.	263
JEDIDIAH VINCENT HUNTINGTON	267
GEORGE LUNT	268
HENRY LYNDEN FLASH	270
ALBERT LAIGHTON	271
BENJAMIN PENHALLOW SHILLABER	272
CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN	278
ANONYMOUS	279

FEMALE SONNETEERS.

MRS. ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH	287
FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE	296
ANNE CHARLOTTE LYNCH	304
MRS. SARAH JOSEPHA HALE	309
MRS. MARY NOEL McDONALD	315
MRS. E. C. KINNEY	321
MRS. ANNA MARIA LOWELL	326
MRS. ELIZABETH JESUP EAMES	327
MRS. ELIZABETH F. SWIFT	331
MRS. EMMA CATHARINE EMBURY	333
MRS. SARAH HELEN WHITMAN	335
MRS. ANNA MARIA WELLS	336
MRS. ELIZABETH FRIES ELLET	337
MRS. ALICE BRADLEY NEAL	339
TRANQUILLA	341
SARAH GOULD	343

ENGLISH SONNETS.

CONTINUED.



VOL. II.

I



ENGLISH SONNETS.

HENRY ELLISON.

I.

ON THE ARRIVAL OF THE VESSEL ANNOUNCING THE SETTLEMENT OF DIFFERENCES WITH AMERICA.*

THERE comes a gallant vessel, in full trim,
Into the haven, high, majestic,
With music in her motion, as if all
The waves, o'er which she doth so lightly skim,
Rose up and sunk in cadence to each whim
And playful fancy of her rise and fall !
The sun is sinking, gilding yon dark pall
Of clouds, whose edges even now grow dim,
Ready to close around the grave of day !
But whence comes she, with sails the sun makes gold,
To fit them golden missions to convey ?
Brings she Hesperian fruitage, long foretold,
From the far West ? O yes, she comes to say,
She brings its best fruit, Peace, typed in that fable old !

* The Poetry of Real Life. By Henry Ellison. 1844.

II.

POETRY A DAILY BREAD.

O MUSE, thy nourishment, which unto some
Is but as manna in the wilderness,
Found but in seasons of their strange distress
And sorrows, which unseal lips elsewhile dumb,
And make the waters in dry places come, —
The heart's Castalian springs! — to me is less
Than this, yet more ; — the daily bread I bless,
And live on ; household bread, and made at home !
And if, with no profane comparison,
Reader, I break and offer it to thee,
'T is as a sacrament, a sublime one,
The sacrament of Man's Humanity !
Of which partaking, I would have thee none
But as thy Brethren view, whate'er they be.

III.

BY THE SEA-SHORE.

HERE sit I, like some god of the old prime,
Just wakened into divine consciousness ;
Like Neptune, when his great hand did caress
The Ocean's mane first, at the dawn of Time,
Ere his dread name had passed into a rhyme !
Here sit I, while the sea with wavy stress
And emphasis, and utterance nothing less
Than epic, lends a voice to thoughts sublime !
Here sit I, musing upon things to come
Beyond all reach of mortal eloquence ;
Till, unto that which had but struck me dumb,
The great Sea, giving articulate sound and sense,
Sublimes the mighty but confuséd hum
Into a voice as of Omnipotence !

IV.

AGAINST PRIDE OF INTELLECT.

PROUD Poet, think'st thou that the mass of men,
Low as they seem beneath thy fancied height,
Have yet no other sources of delight,
No poesy, save that of thy poor pen?
Little as distance makes them to thy ken,
Haply that self-same distance, to their sight,
Makes thee as little seem, and with more right,
Who deem'st thyself not of them, and art then,
And just for this, beneath them. — Is yon Sun,
Rising in glory, not far better, pray,
Than thy description of it? the lark's lay
Itself, than all thy verses on it? one
Sweet flower more than all that thou canst say,
And far beyond thy best comparison?

V.

A PRIVILEGE WORTH A HARD EARNING.

It is the hardest task, the highest end,
Of all true wisdom, rightly understood,
To see the Ill, yet not o'erlook the Good,
Nor let the Ill beyond itself extend,
Nor o'er the sunny side its shadows send
Beyond its own intrinsic magnitude,
As mountains cast their shadows far, and brood
At distance, and their own real bulk transcend.
'T is hard to school the heart to be, in spite
Of injury and envy, generous still ;
In seeing Good alone to take delight,
And to forget, or to forgive, the Ill :
And he who can do this, has still a right
To think godlike of man, and must, and will.

VI.

A MUSIC YET UNKNOWN, REMAINING TO BE HEARD ON
EARTH.

THE music of the days which are to come
Doth haunt me ever, and my footsteps move
In time unto it, — paces of deep love
And faith unchangeable ! I hear the hum
Of mighty workings, and cannot be dumb.
To the grand concert of the spheres above.
Mankind moves on, vain omens to disprove,
While overhead, and in the vanward, some
Prophetic soul, lark-like, doth soar and sing.
A few poor snatches of that music here,
My fellow-men, I, as a pledge, would bring, —
The music at my heart still answering clear,
Which tells me that there must be yet some string
Untouched, which God intended Man to hear.

EGERTON WEBBE.

TO A FOG.*

HAIL to thee, Fog ! most reverend, worthy Fog !
 Come in thy full-wigged gravity : I much
 Admire thee : — thy old dulness hath a touch
 Of true respectability. The rogue
 That calls thee names (a fellow I could flog)
 Would beard his grandfather, and trip his crutch ;
 But I am dutiful, and hold with such
 As deem thy solemn company no clog.
 Not that I love to travel best *incog.*,
 To pounce on latent lamp-posts, or to clutch
 The butcher in my arms, or in a bog
 Pass afternoons ; but while through thee I jog,
 I feel I am true English, and no Dutch,
 Nor French, nor any other foreign dog
 That never mixed his grog
 Over a sea-coal fire a day like this,
 And bid thee scowl thy worst, and found it bliss,
 And to himself said, “ Yes,
 Italia’s skies are fair, her fields are sunny,
 But, * * * * * ! Old England for my money.”

* This is the sonnet with the *coda* (or tail) alluded to in the Introductory Essay, page 60. The gap in the last line is left to be

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES, LORD HOUGHTON.

I.

HAPPINESS.

A SPLENDOR amid glooms, a sunny thread
Woven into a tapestry of cloud,
A merry child a-playing with the shroud
That lies upon a breathless mother's bed,
A garland on the front of one new-wed,
Trembling and weeping while her troth is vowed,
A school-boy's laugh that rises light and loud
In licensed freedom from ungente dread ;—
These are ensamples of the Happiness
For which our nature fits us. More and less
Are parts of all things to the mortal given,
Of Love, Joy, Truth, and Beauty. Perfect light
Would dazzle, not illuminate, our sight ;
From Earth it is enough to glimpse at Heaven.

filled up by the readers, according to their respective notions of what is fittest for the nonce, or properest to be read aloud. The word "*Yes*," though an allowable rhyme to *bliss* and *this*, especially on a comic occasion, may also, if the reader pleases, be emphatically pronounced "*yes*." It is a license often taken by conversers in England ; and I remember saying so to my friend, when I first read the verses. I think he said that he intended to imply the license in the rhyme ; but at all events I am sure he agreed with me, and laughed heartily ; and we read it so accordingly on the spot.

II.

AFTER REVISITING CAMBRIDGE AFTER A LONG ABSENCE.

I HAVE a debt of my heart's own to thee,
School of my soul, old lime and cloister shade,
Which I, strange creditor, should grieve to see
Fully acquitted and exactly paid.
The first ripe taste of manhood's best delights,
Knowledge imbibed, while mind and heart agree,
In sweet belated talk on winter nights,
With friends whom growing time keeps dear to me, —
Such things I owe thee, and not only these :
I owe thee the far beaconing memories
Of the young dead, who, having crossed the tide
Of life where it was narrow, deep, and clear,
Now cast their brightness from the further side
On the dark-flowing hours I breast in fear.

III.

TO CHARLES LAMB.

THEE I would think one of the many wise,
Who in Eliza's time sat eminent,
To our now world, his Purgatory, sent
To teach us what true English poets prize.
Pasquilant froth and foreign galliardize
Are none of thine ; but, when of gay intent,
Thou usest staid old English merriment,
Mannerly mirth, which no one dare despise.
The scoffs and girds of our poor critic rout
Must move thy pity, as amidst their mime,
Monk of Truth's Order, from thy memories
Thou dost updraw sublime simplicities,
Grand thoughts that never can be wearied out,
Showing the unreality of Time.

IV.

THE FOREST.

I LOVE the forest ; I could dwell among
That silent people, till my thoughts upgrew
In nobly ordered form, as to my view
Rose the succession of that lofty throng.
The mellow footstep on a ground of leaves
Formed by the slow decay of numerous years,
The couch of moss, whose growth alone appears
Beneath the fir's inhospitable eaves,
The chirp and flutter of some single bird,
The rustle in the brake, — what precious store
Of joys have these on poets' hearts conferred ?
And then at times to send one's own voice out,
In the full frolic of *one* startling shout,
Only to feel the after-stillness more.

THOMAS WADE.

I.

SHELLEY AND KEATS, AND THEIR "REVIEWER." *

Two heavenly doves I saw, which were indeed
Sweet birds and gentle, — like the immortal pair
That waft the Cyprian chariot through the air, —
And with their songs made music, to exceed
All thought of what rich poesy might be ;
At which a crow, perched on a sullen tree,
Dingy and hoarse, made baser by their brightness,
Would fain be judge of melody and whiteness,
And cawed dire sentence on those sweet-throat turtles ;
To which his fellow-flock of carrion things
Croaked clamorous assent ; but still the wings
Of those pure birds are white amid the myrtles
Of every grove, where cull they nectar's seed,
Whilst still on cold, dead flesh, those carrion creatures feed.

* From the "Tatler" of 1831. We should have given more sonnets of this poet, but have unfortunately lost the volume in which they appeared.

II.

SHELLEY.

HOLY and mighty Poet of the spirit
That broods and breathes along the universe !
In the least portion of whose starry verse
Is the great breath the spheréd heavens inherit —
No human song is eloquent as thine ;
For, by a reasoning instinct all divine,
Thou feel'st it the soul of things ; and thereof singing,
With all the madness of a skylark, springing
From earth to heaven, the intenseness of thy strain,
Like the lark's music, all around is ringing,
Laps us in God's own heart, and we regain
Our primal life ethereal ! Men profane
BlaspHEME thee ; I have heard thee *dreamer* styled —
I've mused upon this wakefulness — and smiled.

III.

A PROPHECY.

THERE is a mighty dawning on the earth
Of human glory ; dreams unknown before
Fill the mind's boundless world, and wondrous birth
Is given to great thought ; and deep-drawn lore,
But late a hidden fount, at which a few
Quaffed and were glad, is now a flowing river,
Which the parched nations may approach and view,
Kneel down and drink, or float on it forever ;
The bonds of spirit are asunder broken,
And matter makes a very sport of distance ;
On every side appears a silent token
Of what will be hereafter, when existence
Shall even become a pure and equal thing,
And earth sweep high as heaven, on solemn wing.

IV.

CALVUS.

BOLD mortal! thou dost ape the skeleton
That satirizes man and all his doings
From every opened grave ; and shouldst seem one,
But for the glow-worm which is in thine eyes,
And certain airs that from thy lips arise :
Why, now to see thee at thine amorous cooings,
Or gravely preaching immortality,
To which thy living death's-head gives the lie,
Would make the shadow that all life receiveth
Shake his dim sides with horrible derision.
'Tell us, old Calvus ! what about thee cleaveth,
To make distinction still between the vision
Of a death's-head and thine ? Get thee false hair,
For thy sole privilege to upper air.

THOMAS JAMES JUDKIN.

I.

SPECIAL PLEADING.*

(Craving the Critic's Notice.)

GENTLE, it is my wont, when newly writ
A sonnet, madrigal, or ode, to show
The same to Emily, that I may know
By her sweet face (taste's dial) if in it
Be aught unworthy of a poet's fit ;
And with the knittings of her altered brow,
Or with the playful smiles that come and go,
I hold no parle, but instantly commit,
Or not, such brain-work to the flames. Thus, Sir,
I now beseech, in Courtesy's good name,
Where there is need thou wilt but gently blame,
Seeing that half the fault belongs to her ;
Yet speak thy best praise freely when 't is due,
Since one kind word for her, to me is two.

* "By-Gone Moods ; or, Hues of Fancy and Feeling, from the Spring to the Autumn of Life. By the Rev., T. J. Judkin, M. A., formerly of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. London, 1856."

II.

“EUREKA!”*

“EUREKA!” still “Eureka!” was my cry ;
While Echo shouts of answering joyance sent,
As through the garden door, on mischief bent,
I flung myself upon the sward close by
The startled Kate, who sat with musing eye,
On some old poet’s charming verse intent ;
“Eureka? — what by such strange word is meant?”
“‘I’ve found it,’ — yes ; e’en that which thousands try,
And try in vain, to find within the pages
Aforetime written by the white-haired sages,
Or by long communings with present men,
Native or foreign, through life’s varied stages, —
TRUTH!” — “Where?” — “In woman’s lips.” — And
kissing then
Kate’s lips, I laughing spake the word again.

* “*I have found it!*” — the famous exclamation of Archimedes when he discovered the means of finding the quantum of alloy in the crown of Hiero, King of Sicily.

III.

A CHARACTER, DRAWN FROM THE LIFE.*

AN old man with a fiddle in his hand,
Which oft on village green, at wake, or fair,
Gave motion to the feet of many a pair
Of hand-linked swains ; the roamer of a band,
Who, holding neither right in house or land,
Live by the hedges in the open air ;
He, with a stooping body ghostly spare,
A guileful eye, and rutted cheek long tanned
By sun, dew, wind, and rain, to sallow brown,
Besought our passing dole. “ ’T is hard,” he said,
“ At fourscore years to struggle up and down
This *awesome* country for one’s daily bread.”
Then, scraping from his crazy instrument
A sprightly air, in sadness on he went.

* Entitled by the author, “A Travelling Incident, — Cumberland.” The only doubt perhaps of the truth of this excellent picture is suggested by the word “sadness” in the concluding line. It is not improbable that the man of the “guileful eye” had his pocket full of money at the time, and that the look of sadness in his face was a trick of trade.

IV.

PICKING AND STEALING.

Now Jane was under that old mulberry-tree,
So watched and guarded near the summer-house ;
I caught her pilfering from the lower boughs, —
“ Dear Heaven ! what purple lips ! they ’ll surely be
To in-door folk no doubtful history.”

Now this to ’scape she stood with knitted brows
In pretty strife betwixt the *ifs* and *hows*, —
No spring was near, — and turning full on me,
She said, “ Sweet cousin, thy advice I pray.”

“ It is,” quoth I (one arm her waist enfolding,
And with the other hand her small wrists holding),
“ It is, to kiss those tell-tale stains away.”
But ah ! as kisses oft will do, this made
The matter worse, and both of us betrayed.

GEORGE POWELL THOMAS.

I.

TO CONSTANCE, IN ABSENCE.*

THOU art not here ! And ere we meet again,
Long years may pass away, and even thou,
My fair young bride, — some shadows on thy brow,
The tokens some of time and some of pain,
May, ere that hour, have stolen in, to stain
The fairest face that e'er won lover's vow. —
What matter ? Be thy heart as it is now ;
Let that its freshness, beauty, truth retain,
And something of its own sweet power to adorn
Whate'er it loves, with such divinest light
As hovers o'er the mountain-top at morn,
Yet makes the poorest blossom heavenly bright :
Blest in those arms from which I now am torn,
I shall note nothing, then, of time or blight.

* "Poems by George Powell Thomas, Captain Bengal Army,
Author of 'Views of Simla.'"

II.

THE SAME SUBJECT.

BUT ah ! the Future ! That lies far away,
Hidden in mists above whose murky shade
Ev'n Hope, the flatterer, into air doth fade,
Till, of her radiant presence, scarce one ray
Lingers to light my solitary way.

Dread Future ! Ever, as my heart had strayed
'Mid thy dim wastes, it hurries back, afraid,
And by the wayside sits alone, to pray, —
A timid traveller who has lost his track,
And cowers in solitude, of home to muse,
Of home, to which he fain would wander back,
Following his heart there, but the Fates refuse ;
And there he sits in dark cold misery,
With Memory alone ! — 't is so with me.

III.

TO FAME.

O FAME! what art thou? — Who can know, alas!
His claim to any share in thee or thine,
Till he has passed that dim and awful line,
Which no man ever passed or e'er shall pass,
Prizing thy gifts! Rare beings still amass
Treasures that after-ages count divine;
Yet ere they pass from earth, thou giv'st no sign
That they in memory shall outlive the mass.
How oft, in life, they pine for very bread,
While wordy critics smirch their lays with blots;
How oft above each unremembered head,
Year after year, the dock or hemlock rots;
And then thou nam'st their love, or woe, or mirth;
And towns that let them die boast that they gave
them birth.

IV.

THE FIRST RAILWAY TRAIN IN INDIA.

A HOWL, as of a demon, startles night,
A rushing horror hurtles through the air,
And thrust from home by terrible affright,
As at an earthquake, forth the people fare,
Staring and trembling! — What unwonted sight
Astounds them, where they shudder unaware?
Is it some new avátar of his might
To whom they offer their barbaric prayer?
An incarnation new of Mahadeo,
Whose coming so delighted earth of yore?
Or is it tigers? wolves? in pity say, oh! —
“Hands off! — don’t bother; — don’t be such a bore!
There’s naught to shout and tremble at, I tell ’ee!
’T is only our first railway train to Delhi.”

V.

JUMNOTREE.*

SHARP, clear, and crystalline, cleaving the sky
In twain, it towers forever and alone,
Save that about its feet the tall hills lie,
Like slaves around some mighty despot's throne ;
While evermore, beneath its cold stern eye,
The short-lived centuries have come and flown,
And stars that round its head untiring fly,
Confess its glories ancient as their own.
The eagles shun it in their highest flight ;
The clouds lie basking 'neath its eminence ;
Naught nears it but thin air and heaven's sweet light,
Nor not a sound forever cometh thence,
Save of some avalanche from its summit riven,
Or thunder-tempest on its breakers driven.

* From *Jumna*, — the river, — and *aotar*, — a descent ; a peak in the Himalayas, twenty-five thousand feet above the level of the sea.

GEORGE JAMES DE WILDE.

I.

THE WATER-MILL.

THERE ; — it may serve perhaps some future day,
Dull though the pencil be, and duller he
Who guides it, to recall to memory
The exquisite beauties of this rural way,
Tempting the hurried traveller to delay : —
The mill down in the dell ; the huge beech-tree
Flinging its great black arms protectingly
Over the useful stream, with one hot ray
From Autumn's cloudless sky touched, like a star ;
The feathery greenery sheltering everywhere ;
The one bright strip of greensward seen afar
Between the mossy trunks. — May never care
Come to the Mill, its clattering glee to mar,
Making all foul within, while all around is fair.

II.

WHEATHAMSTEAD.

To thy fresh slopes and hazel-shadowed lanes,
And sedgy river with its deep green nooks,
Where sits the watching hen, and skyward looks
The water-lily ; — to thy breezy plains
And village homes, long years gone by I came,
Lured by the magic of a mighty name,
A glad enthusiast. I come once more, —
Not with the exulting heart which then I bore,
But with a heavy memory that never
Shall fail to shadow what bright hour soever, —
To find thee still as lovely as of yore,
And feel the poet's truth is written here, —
“ A thing of beauty is a joy forever ” ;
Hearty and homely, loving Hertfordshire.*

* See Charles Lamb's exquisite paper in the “ Essays of Elia,” entitled “ Mackery End, in Hertfordshire.”

III.

EYDON HALL.

(The Seat of the Rev. C. F. Annesley.)

“Era il detto luogo sopra una piccola montagnetta, da ogni parte lontano alquanto alle nostre strade, di varj albuscelli e piante tutte di verde fronde ripieno, piacevoli a riguardare: in sul colmo della quale era un palagio . . . con pratelli dattorno, e con giardini maravigliosi.” — BOCCACCIO.

VERT alleys with trim trees arching o'erhead,
And ending in a vista of blue hills,
Statue, or vase, or nook where grottoed rills,
Trickling from stone to stone, clear coolness shed;
Elsewhere a pleasaunce, with quaint patterns spread
Of rarest flowers; an orangery that fills
The air with that sweet odor which distils
From Lisbon or the Azores, seaward led.
There needs but laughter from the shrubberies coming,
Ladies, and rustling silks, a gorgeous show,
And mantled cavaliers chitarras strumming
Or whispering love in willing ears; — and lo!
A picture by Lancret or by Watteau,
Or tale recorded by Boccaccio.

IV.

ON THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING.

Now is the young Spring with us : her blue eyes
And sunny smile come flushing through the tears
Rude March hath startled from her ; for she hears
The gentle footfall and the wooing sighs
Of coming April, nor to him denies
(Sweet task !) the soothing of her virgin fears.
More balmy and more balmy, as he nears,
Her breath becomes ; more sunny bright her eyes.
And now *to live* ! — now to arouse and shake
The wintry torpor from the spirit, — now
To see the early Sun from slumber wake,
And bathe in moonshine the uplifted brow ;
To shame dull Winter, — time for work, — yet take
Much holiday for art's and friendship's sake.

JOHN WATSON DALBY.

I.

AT BERKHAMSTEAD.

WATERS ! all calm and bright as heaven above,
In peace and beauty still your course pursuing ;
Ruins ! and ye wild springs ! that fondly love
To throw a deathless sweetness over ruin ;
Hills ! o'er whose brows in other days we bounded
When fresh delight was in our hearts and eyes,
And all that lay before us or surrounded,
Shone with a beauty heightened by surprise :
Had earth a stray bliss, then the quick sense found it,
From morn's first blush to ray of evening star ;
And then the natural revel well we rounded,
Lifting full cups to loving hearts afar.
Well may our own faint, staggered and astounded,
At thought of what and where those loved ones are.

II.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THE mirror of my life, ye lie before me !

Reflecting all its gladness and its gloom ; —

There the wild joy ye never may restore me,

That, when I saw ye first, came flushing o'er me ;

And there the eternal barrier of the tomb.

Crowding upon me here what memories come,

Glad meeting, pleasant lingering, and gay strolling :

Alas, how briefly shines the vision for me !

Away the glory and the joy are rolling, —

Away the glowing Future which it bore me !

And through the mind, confusing sense and sight,

Comes to my startled ear the death-bell tolling ;

And a shroud covers Beauty and Delight,

Mantling the gauds of morn in glooms of night.

III.

A WAYSIDE ADVENTURE.

HE was a native of the North countrie,
But left it early, — an adventurous lad ;
His look I know not if severe or sad,
Shrewd surely and with even a latent glee ;
And a broad deeply-furrowed brow had he.
Albeit no Scot, the accent made me glad,
Awaking love and kindly memory.
"With song and friendship we are wisely mad,"
Methought ; "and this shall be a merry hour.
Of this man's soul I hold the secret key :
Grave, silent, strong, yet shall he feel my power,
And that of the heart-linker, Sympathy.
One word shall bring the land for which he yearns,
One magic word." — I spoke it, — *it was Burns.*

IV.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THEN Scotia came to him, and *Auld Lang Syne*,
And he poured out the story of his life,
Loves, struggles, studies, hope, despair, and strife ;
Much thanks, some murmurs, but no childish whine ;
And ever and anon the well-loved line
That fixed a principle or stamped a truth,
And crowned in manhood the best dreams of youth, —
Ne'er seemed the Bard of Ayr so all divine.
That wayside Inn shall be remembered yet,
And all our gossip o'er that humble glass.
By chance and in a chimney nook we met,
And *Burns* and *Nature* glorified the place.

V.

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

TWELVE — but Macaulay had but now been closed ;
Sleep could not quickly follow page so fine ;
One — and strange figures filled my wakeful eye ;
Two — and the lightning finds those eyes unclosed ;
Three — and for no brief instant had I dozed ;
Four — and slow morn did on the casement shine,
But where my strength for challenge so divine ?
Five — still for slumber wholly indisposed
I on my restless pillow turn and twist,
Reaching a hopeful weariness by *six* ;
And then all sense of outer objects missed,
I with the Cavaliers and Roundheads mix
Awhile, to rise an irate rogue, perplexed,
Vexing the house because myself am vexed.

VI.

AT THE AUST FERRY HOTEL.

O DAINTY diamond-ornamented fingers,
Puzzling plain folks, and leading some astray
Who pore o'er panes where the inscription lingers
Recording jovial rest, or anxious stay,
I rather wish your Latin were away,
Although the epigrams are obvious stingers ;
And the fine Roman hand — it makes one say,
Was 't Coleridge, Southey, Lamb — was 't one of Earth's
fine singers ?
“ One touch,” *et cætera* ; — banter as they may,
We see ourselves in him who could not pass
Nor leave remembrance of himself some way,
Though 't were but on the fragile face of glass.
And who this mild ambition would gainsay
In my opinion writes himself an ass !

VII.

A RENCONTRE AT TYTHERINGTON.

(Merci, Monsieur, merci !)

FORTH from the farmer's hospitable nook,
Among the trees and where the waters gushed, —
A holy calmness all the welkin hushed,
And lo ! before me stood, or rather shook,
A tall gaunt figure iron want had crushed
Into a thing scarce humanlike. He spoke,
Help in his native accents did invoke,
While through his frame a tide of diverse feelings
rushed.

“ Poor, wretched, and from Paris ! ” all he said ;
Yet, plainly written in his visage pale,
Fancy could still piece out the mournful tale ;
And, right or wrong, the history fully read
Of the wan outcast in a Gloucester vale,
In that sad, low, strange tongue, imploring bread.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

I.

THE POLISH INSURRECTION.

BLOW ye the trumpet ; gather from afar
The hosts to battle ; be not bought and sold.
Arise, brave Poles, the boldest of the bold ;
Break through your iron shackles, — fling them far.
O for those days of Piast, ere the Czar
Grew to this strength among his deserts cold ;
When even to Moscow's cupolas were rolled
The growing murmurs of the Polish war !
Now must your noble anger blaze out more
Than when from Sobieski, clan by clan,
The Moslem myriads fell and fled before ;
Than when Zamoyski smote the Tartar Khan ;
Than, earlier, when on the Baltic shore
Boleslas drove the Pomeranian.

II.

A SOLDIER-PRIEST.

To J. M. K.

My hope and heart is with thee, — thou wilt be
A latter Luther and a soldier-priest
To scare church-harpies from the Master's feast ;
Our dusted velvets have much need of thee :
Thou art no sabbath-drawler of old saws
Distilled from some worm-cankered homily ;
But spurred at heart with fieriest energy
To embattail and to wall about thy cause
With iron-worded proof, hating to hark
The humming of the drowsy pulpit-drone
Half God's good sabbath, while the worn-out clerk
Browbeats his desk below. Thou, from a throne
Mounted in heaven, wilt shoot into the dark
Arrows of lightnings. I will stand and mark.

III.

SONNET.

O, WERE I loved as I desire to be !

What is there in the great sphere of the earth,

Or range of evil between death and birth,

That I should fear, — if I were loved by thee ?

All the inner, all the outer world of pain,

Clear love would pierce and cleave, if thou wert mine ;

As I have heard that somewhere in the main

Fresh-water springs come up through bitter brine.

'T were joy, not fear, clasped hand in hand with thee,

To wait for death — mute — careless of all ills,

Apart upon a mountain, though the surge

Of some new deluge from a thousand hills

Flung leagues of roaring foam into the gorge

Below us, as far on as eye could see.

CHARLES TENNYSON.

I.

THE DELIGHTS OF INTELLECT UNPERTURBING.

VEXATION waits on passion's changeful glow,
But th' intellect may rove a thousand ways,
And yet be calm while fluctuating so :
The dew-drop shakes not to its shifting rays
And transits of soft light. Be bold to choose
This never satiate freedom of delight,
Before the fiery bowl and red carouse,
And task for joy thy soul's majestic might ;
So for the sensual will be rarer need ;
So will thy mind a giant force assume,
Strong as the centre of the deep Maelstrom,
When flung into the calm of sightless speed ;
So wilt thou scorn on lowlier aims to feed,
And go in glory to a sage's tomb.

II.

ON SEEING A CHILD BLUSH ON HIS FIRST VIEW OF A
CORPSE.

'T is good our earliest sympathies to trace,
And I would muse upon a little thing, —
What brought the blush into that infant's face,
When first confronted with the rueful King?
He boldly came : what made his courage less?
A signal for the heart to beat less free
Are all imperial presences ; and he
Was awed by Death's consummate kingliness,
And by the high and peerless front he bore.
No thought of dying armies crossed the lad ;
He feared the stranger, though he knew no more ;
Surmising and surprised, but most, afraid ;
As Crusoe, wandering on the desert shore,
Saw but an alien footmark, and was sad !

III.

THE RAINBOW.

HUNG on the shower that fronts the golden west,
The rainbow bursts like magic on mine eyes,
In hues of elden promise there imprest,
Frail in its date, eternal in its guise.

The vision is so lovely that I feel
My heart endued with beauty like its own,
And taking an indissoluble seal
From what is here a moment, and is gone.

It lies so soft on the full-breasted storm,
New born o' the middle air, and dewy-pure,
And tricked in nature's choicest garniture ;
What can be seen of lovelier dye or form ?
While all the groves assume a ghastly stain,
Caught from the leaden rack and shining rain.

IV.

THE RINGLET.

(To —.)

I HAVE a circlet of thy sunny hair,
And 't is, I wot, a blessing to mine eyes ;
For gentle, happy thoughts are sworn to rise,
Whene'er I view it, softly folded there,
Lifeless and listless, like a treasure's key,
Unwitting of the dreams it doth compel
Of gems and gold piled high in secret cell,
Too royal for a vulgar gaze to see !
If they were stolen, the key might never tell ;
If thou wert dead, what should the ringlet say ?
It shows the same, betide thee ill or well,
Smiling on earth, or shrouded in decay !
And were cold winter with thee, Isabel,
I might be smiling here on blossoms of thy May.

V.

ON STARTLING SOME PIGEONS.

A HUNDRED wings are dropped as soft as one,
Now ye are lighted ; lovely to my sight
The fearful circle of your gentle flight,
Rapid and mute, and drawing homeward soon ;
And then, the sober chiding of your tone
(As there ye sit, from your own roofs arraigning
My trespass on your haunts, so boldly done)
Sounds like a solemn and a just complaining !
O happy, happy race ! for though there clings
A feeble fear about your timid clan,
Yet are ye blest ! with not a thought that brings
Disquietude ; while proud and sorrowing man,
An eagle, weary of his mighty wings,
With anxious inquest fills his little span.

VI.

SILKWORMS AND SPIDERS.

THE worm long fosters his transforming sleep,
But claims th' inalienable life again,
Which, though it be but one, yet seemeth twain,
The trance between is all so deadly deep :
The careful spider spreads before his lair
The web, ygathered near his filmy heart
Withouten throes or any vital smart,
And of his entrails makes his foes a snare.
In both a mighty mystery resides,
A truth, on whose development they thrive ;
One for the cravings of his life provides,
One weaves himself another way to live.
To reach the secret is beyond our lore,
And man must rest, till God doth furnish more.

FREDERICK TENNYSON.*

I.

THE VILLAGE BENEFACTRESS.

DEAR Village Maid, who from thy little store,
Of knowledge, and of riches, canst supply
The flower and fruitage of humanity,
Balm for thyself, and comfort for the poor ;
I never pass the woodbines round thy door
But in my heart there swells a wistful sigh, —
O, could I change all gauds of vanity
For peace like thine, increasing evermore !
By day thy sweet face, passing through the gate,
Is welcome as the bounty-bearing light,
Thy frugal lamp is to the desolate
A star of promise, dawning through the night ;
O, if all hearts were only like to thine,
Night would not be, though stars should cease to shine !

* "Days and Hours," by Frederick Tennyson, 1854. We have taken a liberty with the author, and with the reader, in calling these stanzas sonnets, and setting them forth in the present manner ; for though sonnets they are in point of construction, after a favorite illegitimate fashion, yet the author does not so call them, nor in his pages are they thus distinguished by headings. They form portions,

II.

HER VISITS TO HER MOTHER'S GRAVE.

OFTTIMES I mark thee, while the village tower
Takes the first glow of the new-risen morn,
Bending among the tombs like one forlorn ;
There is thy mother's grave ; there, sun or shower,
Art thou, and there is cherished every flower
She loved the best ; and 't is thy secret trust
That in the blossoms springing from her dust
Lives something of her to this very hour.
There, on the Sabbath days, mayst thou be seen
The first of all, the last to linger there ;
Sweet memories of her virtues come between
Thy whispered words, and mingle with thy prayer ;
And aged women, doomed to endless toil,
Stay by the porch, and weep with thee, or smile.

and not even consecutive portions, of a poem consisting of twelve of them, entitled *Martha* ; so that perhaps we have wronged them in that respect also. But they so worthily record a beautiful character, and it is so pleasant to see the names of this family of poets in conjunction, — for Frederick Tennyson is a brother of the Laureate's, — that, as he does not appear to have written any sonnets professed, we were tempted to bring him and his heroine into our volume in this manner.

III.

HER SECRET GRIEF.

“O, SURE,” some said, “to her kind Heaven hath dealt
Freedom from earthly penance, that can share
The common ills of others, and their care
Surely so free a heart hath never felt
The fetters of great sorrows, that can melt
With simple tears, and laugh with simple joys.”
Alas ! they had not heard the hidden sighs
Folded within thy conscience, pure of guilt :
There was another’s heart that answered thee ;
He grew beside thee, till your hopes were one ;
Far off he sleeps, afar beyond the sea ;
And thou hast vowed through Death’s great gates alone
To pass into thy bridal, and to lay
His image near thee on thy dying day.

IV.

HER SICKNESS AND RECOVERY.

WHEN thou wert laid in sickness and in pain
Through one sad autumn, O the falling leaf
Fell gentlier by thy casement in its grief,
And still as holy tears, the evening rain ;
Methought the hamlet ne'er would wake again,
So mighty was the sorrow and the calm ;
And children wailed, and many a withered palm
Was raised to heaven for thee, and not in vain.
The meek, the rugged, wept beside thy door ;
The evil-minded took another way ;
And fewer were the murmurs of the poor
For their own troubles than thine evil day ;
And when another May-day brought thee forth,
Something from heaven had fallen on the earth.

V.

HER EXEMPTION FROM THE COMMON ASPECTS OF DECAY.

O HEART of grace, that, like the lowly flowers,
 Bendest beneath the storms, but dost not break,
 Whom in thy tears kind thoughts do not forsake,
As blessed odors live in thunder-showers ;
Whether the sun shines forth, or tempest lowers,
 Thou art unshaken. In thine utmost need,
 While iron pride is shattered like a reed,
Thy wingéd hopes fly onward with the hours.
Therefore thine eye through mist of many days
 Shines bright ; and beauty, like a lingering rose,
Sits on thy cheek, and in thy laughter plays,
 While wintry frosts have fallen on thy foes ;
And like a vale that breathes the western sky,
Thy heart is green, though summer is gone by.

VI.

A WISH FOR HER DURING THE REMAINDER OF HER LIFE.

WHATEVER be my lot, I pray that thou
Mayst see a cloudless autumn of thy years,
Whose summer-tide hath been o'ercast with tears ;
Though like the clouds, that vainly overflow
The deep clear sky, they have not dimmed thy brow,
Or darkened the quick flame of liberty
Lit in that eye, which fashioned it and thee.
Be thine a vale where western breezes blow
The livelong year, where thou mayst walk at even
'Mid cherished flowers along a garden slope,
And breathe in peace the purity of heaven,
And turn unto the sun with eyes of hope,
With sweet birds every morn to make thee cheer,
And sound of living waters in thine ear.

AUBREY THOMAS DE VERE.

I.

REASONS FOR BEING BELOVED.

THE reason why we love thee, dost thou ask ?
We love for many reasons joined in one :—
Because thy face is fair to look upon ;
Because, when pains or toils our hearts o'ertask,
In sunny smiles of thine they love to bask ;
Because thou honorest all, and harmest none ;
Because thy froward moods so soon are gone ;
Thy many faults and foibles wear no mask ;
Because thou art a woman. Unto me
A gracious woman is a child mature ;
Docile, and gentle, though with many a lure
Enriched, and, in a soft subjection, free ;
A sanguine creature, full of winning ways ;
Athirst for love, and shyly pleased with praise.

II.

REQUESTING TO BE JUDGED BY THE DESIRE, AND NOT BY
THE DESERT.

(Headed by the Author, "A Poet to a Painter.")

THAT which my fault has made me, O paint not :
Paint me as that which I desire to be.
The unaccomplished good that died in thought,
Deep buried in my heart, seek out, set free ;
And all I might have been concede to me :
The veil my error and the world have wrought,
Remove : the cloud disperse : erase the blot :
Bid from my brow the temporal darkness flee.
In that celestial and pure fount, whereof
Some drops affused my childhood, bathe me wholly ;
And shield me from my own deserts : lest they
Who now but see me by the light of love,
A sterner insight learn from thee one day ;
And love pass from them, like some outworn folly.

III.

LOVE SELF-SACRIFICED.

(Entitled by the Author, "Incompatibility.")

FORGIVE me that I love you as I do,
Friend patient long ; too patient to reprove
The inconvenience of superfluous love.
You feel that it molests you, and 't is true.
In a light bark you sit, with a full crew ; —
Your life, full-orbed, compelled strange love to meet,
Becomes, by such addition, incomplete.
Because I love, I leave you. O, adieu !
Perhaps when I am gone the thought of me
May sometimes be your acceptable guest.
Indeed you love me : but my company
Old time makes tedious ; and to part is best.
Not without Nature's will are natures wed : —
O gentle Death, how dear thou mak'st the dead !

IV.

LOVE VINDICATING ITS REJECTER.

(Entitled by the Author, "Troilus and Cressida.")

HAD I been worthy of the love you gave,
That love withdrawn had left me sad, but strong :
My heart had been as silent as my tongue ;
My bed had been unfevered as my grave :
I had not striven for what I could not save :
Back, back to heaven my great hopes I had flung :
'To have much suffered, having done no wrong,
Had seemed to me that noble part the brave
Account it ever. What this hour I am
Affirms the unworthiness that in me lurked :
Some sapping poison through my substance worked,
Some sin not trivial, though it lacked a name,
Which ratifies the deed that you have done
With plain approval. Other plea seek none.

V.

VENICE BY DAY.

THE splendor of the Orient, here of old
Throned with the West, upon a waveless sea,
Her various-vested, resonant jubilee
Maintains, though Venice hath been bought and sold.
In their high stalls of azure and of gold
Yet stand, above the servile concourse free,
Those brazen steeds, — the Car of Victory
Hither from far Byzantium's porch that rolled.
The wingéd Lions, Time's dejected thralls,
Glare with furred plumes. The pictured shapes that
 glow
Like sunset clouds condensed upon the walls
Still boast old wars, or feasts of long ago ;
And still the Sun his amplest glory pours
On all those swelling domes and watery floors.

VI.

VENICE IN THE EVENING.

ALAS ! 'mid all this pomp of the ancient time,
And flush of modern pleasure, dull Decay
O'er the bright pageant breathes her shadowy gray.
As on from bridge to bridge I roam and climb,
It seems as though some wonder-working chime
(Whose spell the Vision raised and still can sway)
To some far source were ebbing fast away ;
As though, by man unheard, with voice sublime
It bade the sea-born Queen of Cities follow
Her Sire into his watery realm far down :
Beneath my feet the courts sound vast and hollow ;
And more than Evening's darkness seems to frown
On sable barks that, swift yet trackless, fleet
Like dreams o'er dim lagoon and watery street.

VII.

INDEPENDENCE.

FREE born, it is my purpose to die free.
Away, degrading cares ; and ye not less,
Delights of sense and gauds of worldliness ;—
I have no part in you, nor you in me.
They that walk brave wear the world's livery ;
Their badge of service is their sumptuous dress.
Seek then your prey in gilded palaces ;
Revere my hovel's humble liberty.
Are there no flowers on earth, in heaven no stars,
That we must place in such low things our trust ?
Let me have noble toils, if toil I must, —
The patriot's task or friendship's sacred cares.
Beside my board that man shall break no crust
Who sells his birthright for a feast of dust.

VIII.

CORREGGIO'S CUPOLAS AT PARMA.

CREATURES all eyes and brows, and tresses streaming
By speed divine blown back ; within, all fire
Of wondering zeal, and storm of bright desire ;—
Round the broad dome the immortal throngs are beaming :
With elemental powers the vault is teeming.
We gaze, and, gazing, join the fervid choir,
In spirit launched on wings that ne'er can tire,
Like those that buoy the breasts of children dreaming.
The exquisitest hand that e'er in light
Revealed the subtlest smile of new-born pleasure
The depth here fathoms, and attains the height ;
Is strong the strength of heavenly hosts to measure ;
Draws back the azure curtain of the skies,
And antedates our promised Paradise.

IX.

WRITTEN WHILE SAILING ON THE GULF OF LEPANTO.

ALL round they lie, deep breath to breath replying, —
Those outworn seamen in their well-earned sleep :
From the blue concave to the dim blue deep
No sound beside. Fluttering all night, or sighing,
Since morn the breeze delicious hath been dying,
And now is dead. On yonder snowy steep
The majesty of Day diffused is lying ;
Whilst Evening's Powers in silence seaward creep,
From glens that violet-shade the lilac vest
Of Delphi's hills. Ye mariners, sleep well !
Run slowly, golden sands, and noiselessly.
There stands the great Corinthian citadel ;
Parnassus there. Rest, wearied pinnacle, rest !
Sleep, sacred air ! sleep on, marmorean sea !

EDMUND OLLIER.

I.

ON WILSON'S PICTURE OF SOLITUDE.*

A FITTING nook for meditative men ! —

A region of neglect and glimmering gloom,
Yet secretly unfolding many a bloom
Worthy of gardens, — to be denizen.

A pillared grotto once was in this glen,
And sculptured shapes ; but see how hungry doom
Has gnawn them half away, while o'er them loom
Black branches, arching like a dusky den ;
Between whose trunks you see, quite overbrowed
With intertwined foliage, dark and drear,
White convent walls gleam like a parting ray
Under the forehead of a thunder-cloud ;
And silently and sad, from year to year,
The cowed monk stagnates, withering away.

* From Ainsworth's Magazine.

II.

A DREAM.

A MAN stood on a barren mountain-peak
In the night, and cried, "O world of heavy gloom!
O sunless world! O universal tomb!
Blind, cold, mechanic sphere, wherein I seek
In vain for Life and Love, till Hope grows weak,
And falters towards Chaos! Vast, blank doom!
Huge darkness in a narrow prison-room!
Thou art dead, — dead!" Yet, ere he ceased to speak,
Across the level ocean, in the East,
The moon-dawn grew; and all that mountain's side
Rose, newly-born from empty dusk. Fields, trees,
And deep glen-hollows, as the light increased,
Seemed vital; and from heaven, bare and wide,
The moon's white soul looked over lands and seas.

III.

A VISION OF OLD BABYLON.

OUTLEAPING from the Present's narrow cage,
I floated on the backward waves of Time,
Until I landed in that antique age
When the now hoary world was in its prime.
How young, and fresh, and green, all things did look !
I stood upon a broad and grassy plain,
Shrouded with leaves, between which, like a brook
Dashed on the turf in showers of golden rain,
The broken sunlight mottled all the land ;
And soon, between the trees, I was aware
Of a vast city, girt with stony band,
That hung upon the burning blue-bright air,
Like snowy clouds which that strange architect,
The Wind, has with his wayward fancies decked.

IV.

THE SUBJECT OF BABYLON CONTINUED.

A WILDERNESS of beauty ! a domain
Of visions and stupendous thoughts in stone, —
The sculptured dream of some enchanter's brain, —
There did I see, all sunning in their own
Splendor and warmth ; a thousand palaces,
Where tower looked out on tower ; all overgrown
With pictured deeds, and coiling traceries,
And monstrous shapes in strange conjunction met,
The idol phantoms of an age long past,
In midst of which the wingéd Bull was set ;
And I saw temples of enormous size,
Silent yet thronged ; and pyramids that cast
Shadows upon each golden-peaked pavilion,
And on the column flushed with azure and vermilion.

V.

THE SUBJECT OF BABYLON CONTINUED.

AND on the top of all the wind-blown towers,
The thronging terraces, and ramparts fair,
And the flat house-roof scorching in the air,
Elysian gardens bloomed with breadths of flowers,
And clouds of moist green leaves, that tenderly
Cooled the fierce radiance sight could scarcely bear ;
Or over grassy lawns hung fluttering high,
Like birds upon the wing, half pausing there ;
Shadows, where winds drooped lingering with a sigh.
And there were fountains all of beaten gold,
That seemed alive with staring imagery,
Fantastical as death ; from which forth rolled,
Like spirits out of Sleep's enchanted ground,
Far-flashing streams, that flung a light all round.

HON. MRS. NORTON.

I.

SONNET.

LIKE an enfranchised bird, that wildly springs,
With a keen sparkle in his glancing eye,
And a strong effort in his quivering wings,
Up to the blue vault of the happy sky, —
So my enamored heart, so long thine own,
At length from Love's imprisonment set free,
Goes forth into the open world alone,
Glad and exulting in its liberty :
But like that helpless bird (confined so long,
His weary wings have lost all power to soar)
Who soon forgets to trill his joyous song,
And, feebly fluttering, sinks to earth once more, —
So from its former bonds released in vain,
My heart still feels the weight of that remembered chain.

II.

TO MY BOOKS.

SILENT companions of the lonely hour, —
Friends who can never alter or forsake,
Who for inconstant roving have no power,
And all neglect, perforce, must calmly take, —
Let me return to you ; this turmoil ending
Which worldly cares have in my spirit wrought,
And, o'er your old familiar pages bending,
Refresh my mind with many a tranquil thought,
Till haply meeting there, from time to time,
Fancies, the audible echo of my own,
'T will be like hearing in a foreign clime
My native language spoke in friendly tone,
And with a sort of welcome I shall dwell
On these, my unripe musings, told so well.

MRS. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

I.

EXPRESSIONLESS.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound,
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night,
With dream and thought and feeling, interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height,
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground !
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air ;
But if I did it, — as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, — my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul !

II.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well, —
That is light grieving ! lighter, none befell,
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! what are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing ; at her marriage-bell,
The bride weeps ; and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills, the poet hath forgot
That moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Whoever weep ; albeit, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert place,
And touch but tombs, — look up ! Those tears will run
Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

III.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

(Affectionately inscribed to Elizabeth Jago.)

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand ;
Whence harmonies we cannot understand
Of God's will in his worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexéd minors. Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear, and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land,
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur, " Where is any certain tune,
Or measured music, in such notes as these ?"
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded ! Their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences ;
And smiling down the stars, they whisper, " Sweet."

IV.

FUTURITY WITH THE DEPARTED.

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil, — I am strong,
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
In Heaven to hold our idols ; and albeit
He brake them to our faces, and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
The dust shook off their beauty, glorified,
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

V.

THE POET.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast
And sees all new. What oftenest he has viewed,
He views with the first glory. Fair and good
Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
But stand before him, holy and undressed
In week-day false conventions, such as would
Drag other men down from the altitude
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
Why, God would tire of all his heavens as soon
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst,
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon!
And therefore hath He set thee in the midst,
Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,
And praise His world forever, as thou bid'st.

VI.

HUGH STUART BOYD.

(His Blindness.)

God would not let the spheric lights accost
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
With all her beckoning hills, whose golden stuff
Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
Yet such things were, to him, not wholly lost, —
Permitted, with his wandering eyes, light-proof,
To have fair visions rendered full enough
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost ;
And seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,
And Gregory's starlight, on Greek-burnished eyes :
Till Sensual and Unsensual seemed one thing
Viewed from one level, — earth's reapers at the sheaves,
Not plainer than Heaven's angels marshalling !

VII.

HUGH STUART BOYD.

(Legacies.)

THREE gifts the dying left me : Æschylus,
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
Of stars, whose motion is melodious.
The books were those I used to read from, thus
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
The darkness of his eyes ; now, mine they mock,
Blinded in turn, by tears : now, murmurous
Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago,
Intoning, from these leaves, the Grecian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
In silence on the shelf within my gaze !
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these parting days !

VIII.

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

You see this dog. It was but yesterday
I mused, forgetful of his presence here,
Till thoughts on thoughts drew downward tear on tear ;
When from the pillow, where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head, as hairy as Faunus, thrust his way
Right sudden against my face ; two golden-clear
Large eyes astonished mine ; a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek, to dry the spray !
I started first, as some Arcadian,
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove.
But as my bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness ; thanking the true Pan,
Who, by low creatures, leads to heights of love.

IX.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.*

THE face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me ; as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, sweet, with thee anear ;
The names of country, heaven, are changed away,
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here ;
And this — this lute and song — loved yesterday
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

* This title is to be understood of all the sonnets that follow.

X.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall,
For such as I to take, or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so. Not cold! but very poor instead!
Ask God who knows! for frequent tears have run
The colors from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! — let it serve to trample on.

XI.

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own and grieve
That givers of such gifts as mine are must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love, — which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

XII.

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed,
And worthy of acceptance. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn or flax ! An equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plant or weed.
And love is fire : and when I say at need,
I love thee — Mark ! — *I love thee !* — in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest. Meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XIII.

AND therefore, if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the woodland nightingale
A melancholy music? — why advert
To these things? O beloved, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place ;
And yet because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love and yet in vain ;
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XIV.

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes, and prove the inner cost, —
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own.
Thy soul hath snatched up mine, all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne ;
And that I love (O soul, I must be meek !),
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XV.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough
Between our faces, to cast light on each?
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold thy spirit so far off
From myself — me — that I should bring thee proof,
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief, —
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

DAVID GRAY.

I.

TO THE MAVIS.

SWEET Mavis ! at this cool delicious hour
Of gloaming, when a pensive quietness
Hushes the odorous air, — with what a power
Of impulse unsubdued, thou dost express
Thyself a spirit ! While the silver dew
Holy as manna on the meadow falls,
Thy song's impassioned clarity, trembling through
This omnipresent stillness, disentralls
The soul to adoration. First I heard
A low, thick, lubric gurgle, soft as love,
Yet sad as memory, through the silence poured
Like starlight. But the mood intenser grows,
Precipitate rapture quickens, move on move
Lucidly linked together, till the close.

II.

TO A BROOKLET.

O DEEP unlovely brooklet, moaning slow
Through moorish fen in utter loneliness !
The partridge cowers beside thy loamy flow
In pulseful tremor, when with sudden press
The huntsman fluskers through the rustled heather.
In March thy fallow buds from vermeil shells
Break satin-tinted, downy as the feather
Of moss-chat that among the purplish bells
Breasts into fresh new life her three unborn.
The plover hovers o'er thee, uttering clear
And mournful-strange his human cry forlorn.
While wearily, alone, and void of cheer
Thou guid'st thy nameless waters from the fen,
To sleep unsunned in an untrampled glen.

III.

TO THE MOON.

WITH what a calm serenity she smooths

Her way through cloudless jasper sown with stars !
Chaster than virtue, sweeter than the truths

Of maidenhood, in Spenser's knightly wars.
For what is all Belphebe's golden hair,

The chastity of Britomart, the love
Of Florimel so faithful and so fair,

To thee, thou Wonder ! And yet far above
Thy inoffensive beauty must I hold

Dear Una, sighing for the Red Cross Knight
Through all her losses, crosses manifold.

And when the lordly Lion fell in fight,
Who, who can paragon her fearful woe ?

Not thou, not thou, O Moon ! didst ever passion so.

IV.

MORPHIA.

O PRECIOUS morphia ! I sanctify

The soothing power that in a painless swoon
Laps my weak limbs, giving me strength to lie,

Till sacred dawn increases until noon :
Then when, from his meridional height,

The sun devolves, and cooling breezes wake,
It is a comfort and divine delight

The weary bed exhausted to forsake,
And bathe my temples in the blessed air.

But when day wanes and the wind-moaning night
Deepens to darkness, then thy virtue rare,

O dream-creative liquid ! brings delight,
Thy silver drops diffusive kindly steep
The senses in the golden juice of sleep.

V.

THE MOON.

COME, light-foot Lady ! from thy vaporous hall,
And, with a silver-swim into the air,
Shine down the starry cressets one and all
From Pleiades to golden Jupiter !
I see a growing tip of silver peep
Above the full-fed cloud, and lo ! with motion
Of queenly stateliness, and smooth as sleep,
She glides into the blue for my devotion.
O sovran Beauty ! standing here alone
Under the insufferable infinite,
I worship with dazed eyes and feeble moan
Thy lucid persecution of delight.
Come, cloudy dimness ! Dip, fair dream, again !
O God ! I cannot gaze, for utter pain.

VI.

MAIDENHOOD.

A SACRED land, to common men unknown,
A land of bowery glades and greenwoods hoary,
Still waters where white stars reflected shone,
And ancient castles in their ivied glory.
Fair knights caparisoned in golden mail,
And maidens whose enchantment was their beauty,
Met but to whisper each the passion-tale,
For love was all their pleasure and their duty.
Here cedar bark, as with a moving will,
Floated through liquid silver all untended ;
Here wrong and baseness ever came to ill,
And virtue with delight was sweetly blended.
This land, dear Spenser ! was thy fair creation,
Made through fine glamour of imagination.

VII.

THE LUGGIE.

O FOR the days of sweet Mythology,
When dripping Naiads taught their streams to glide !
When, 'mid the greenery, one would oftentimes spy
An Oread tripping with her face aside.
The dismal realms of Dis by Virgil sung,
Whose shade led Dante, in his virtue bold,
All the sad grief and agony among,
O'er Acheron, that mournful river old,
Ev'n to the Stygian tide of purple gloom !
Pan in the forest making melody !
And far away where hoariest billows boom,
Old Neptune's steeds with snorting nostrils high !
These were the ancient days of sunny song ;
Their memory yet how dear to the poetic throng ! *

* Speaking of the poems of David Gray (" Poems by David Gray, with Memoirs of his Life, Boston, 1864 "), the Rev. W. R. Alger says : " The poems of this ill-fated and winsome young Scotchman, heart-brother of Robert Burns, are marked by rare tenderness and sincerity, and by that fascinating facility of verbal touch which is one of the choicest characteristics of true genius. Such a pure and pathetic story, such lucid and breathing poetry, as we have here, are charged with a blessed ministry for a coarse

ALEXANDER SMITH.

I.

SOLITARY AT CHRISTMAS, BUT NOT SAD.

Joy like a stream flows through the Christmas streets,
But I am sitting in my silent room,
Sitting all silent in congenial gloom ; —
To-night, while half the world the other greets
With smiles and grasping hands, and drinks and meats,
I sit, and muse on my poetic doom.
Like the dim scent within a budded rose,
A joy is folded in my heart ; and when
I think on Poets nurtured 'mong the throes,
And by the lowly hearths of common men, —
Think of their works, some song, some swelling ode
With gorgeous music growing to a close,
Deep-muffled as the dead-march of a god, —
My heart is burning to be one of those.

and bustling age, for a reckless utilitarian people. The feelings of love, pity, and grief this little book is calculated to awaken will exert a salutary influence, softening the heart, and nourishing human sympathy and poetic sentiment."

II.

THE CHRISTMAS SOLITUDE VARIED WITH THE CHRISTMAS
STREETS.

SHEATHED is the river as it glideth by,
Frost-pearled are all the boughs in forest old,
The sheep are huddling close upon the wold,
And over them the stars tremble on high.
Pure joys these winter-nights around me lie ;
'T is fine to loiter through the lighted streets
At Christmas time, and guess from brow and pace
The doom and history of each one we meet,
What kind of heart beats in each dusky case ;
Whiles startled by the beauty of a face
In a shop-light a moment. Or, instead,
To dream of silent fields, where calm and deep
The sunshine lieth like a golden sleep, —
Recalling sweetest looks of summers dead.

III.

PROPHETICAL SELF-REFLECTED WORDS.

I WROTE a name upon the river sands
With her who bore it standing by my side,
Her large dark eyes lit up with gentle pride,
And leaning on my arm with clasped hands ;
To burning words of mine she thus replied,
“ Nay, write not on thy heart. This tablet frail
Fitteth as frail a vow. Fantastic bands
Will scarce confine these limbs.” I turned love-pale,
I gazed upon the rivered landscape wide,
And thought how little *it* would all avail
Without her love. ’T was on a morn of May,
Within a month I stood upon the sand ;
Gone was the name I traced with trembling hand, —
And from my heart ’t was also gone away.

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.*

I.

ONE'S OWN MOOD REFLECTED IN A DAY-DREAM.

("On the Sunny Shore.")

CHECKERED with woven shadows as I lay
Among the grass, blinking the watery gleam,
I saw an Echo-Spirit in his bay
Most idly floating in the noontide beam.
Slow heaved his filmy skiff, and fell, with sway
Of ocean's giant pulsing ; and the Dream,
Buoyed like the young moon on a level stream
Of greenish vapor at decline of day,
Swam airily, watching the distant flocks
Of sea-gulls, whilst a foot, in careless sweep,
Touched the clear-trembling cool with tiny shocks
Faint-circling ; till at last he dropped asleep,
Lulled by the hush-song of the glittering deep,
Lap-lapping drowsily the heated rocks.

* "The Music-Master, a Love Story ; and Two Series of Day and Night Songs. 1855."

II.

AUTUMNAL TWILIGHT, WITH FRIENDS.

Now Autumn's fire burns slowly along the woods,
And day by day the dead leaves fall and melt,
And night by night the monitory blast
Wails in the keyhole, telling how it passed
O'er empty fields, or upland solitudes,
Or grim wide wave ; and now the power is felt
Of melancholy, tenderer in its moods
Than any joy indulgent Summer dealt.
Dear friends, together in the glimmering eve,
Pensive and glad, with tones that recognize
The soft invisible dew on each one's eyes,
It may be, somewhat thus we shall have leave
To walk with memory, when distant lies
Poor Earth, where we were wont to live and grieve.

III.

ONE'S OWN TOMBSTONE.

IN dream of thought to be among the years
That are not born, like years of long ago,
Who bows not, trembling? Dusk, with steps as slow
As mine, crept through the churchyard, dropping tears
Like one that mourned. I mused and mused; — methought
Some months, some years were gone, and in that spot
Of graves is lingering a thoughtful boy.
Amid the twilight stillness, deep and lone,
He stoops, to read an old half-buried stone,
And weeds the mosses that almost destroy
The letters of the name, which is — my own.
The wind about the old gray tower makes moan.
He rises from the grave with saddened brow,
And leaves it to the night, and sighs, as I do now.

JAMES DODDS.

CRAIGCROOK.

(To JOHN HUNTER.)

I HAVE not found so true a Harmony
As crowns this life of thine, my much-loved friend !
See ! the bright roses o'er the violets bend ;
The oaks with hazels sing in windy glee ;
The lawn looks coy up to yon gazing hill ;
On the same bough are dove and blackbird seen ;
And, as we talk under this alley green,
The robin makes a third, with answering trill.
Within, thy home is meet for such a spot :
Thy youthful dreams — how rare ! — have grown to truth ;
Still rarer, life keeps fine as dream of youth ;
Rarest and best, *this* harmony is given, —
Thy Real drinks music from Ideal Thought,
And Earth but avenues the gate to Heaven !

JOHN HUNTER.

I.

A REPLICATION OF RHYMES.*

(To JAMES DODDS.)

THINE own life too hath reached a Harmony
Of rounder, nobler swell than mine, my friend !
HE is the Hero, whose strong soul can bend
A turbulent nature, panting in the glee
Of young ambition to ascend the hill
Where Worldly Greatness, crowned with power, is seen ;
And, conqueror of himself, can seek the green
Low vale where true Peace dwells, and list the trill
Of home-bred joys that sanctify the spot.
Earth's dazzling meteors for the Torch of Truth
Thou hast exchanged ; and for wild dreams of youth
More glorious aims and nobler gifts are given, —
A Soul of power, a well of lofty Thought,
A chastened Hope that ever points to Heaven.

* This is one of the very few English sonnets written on the Italian principle mentioned at page 53 of the Introductory Essay.

II.

ELIA.

A GENTLE spirit, sweet and pure and kind,
Though strangely witted, — “ high fantastical,” —
Who mantles his deep feelings in a pall
Of motley hues, by contrast more combined,
That seems to hide, yet heightens what ’s enshrined
Beneath ; — who, by a power unknown to all,
Save him alone, can summon at a call
A host of jarring elements, entwined
In wondrous brotherhood, — humor, wild wit,
Quips, cranks, puns, sneers, — with clear sweet thought
 profound ; —
And stinging jests, with honey for the wound ; —
The subtlest lines of all fine powers, split
To their last films, then marvellously spun
In magic web, whose million hues are one !

III.

AUTUMN TWILIGHT.

(To ——.)

BLEST Twilight, — season of my soul's best hopes !
How dear to gaze upon thy deepening skies,
Breathing their balm o'er Autumn's mellow dyes !
To list the voice of streamlets down the slopes
Of these sweet uplands, and from out yon copse
To catch the thrush's note, low breathed, like sighs
From Love's too happy heart, when meeting eyes
Transfuse the mutual soul ; and, oft as drops
The pale sear leaf, to muse on change and chance,
Yet feel no fears ! How should I, loveliest one !
While thou art with me, and in thy deep glance
I read my future fate, undimmed by woes,
Whose course shall, like this day's, move gently on,
In varying beauty, to its last calm close ?

IV.

DAY-DAWN.

THE first low fluttering breath of wakening Day
Stirs the wide air. Thin clouds of pearly haze
Float slowly o'er the sky, to meet the rays
Of the unrisen sun, — whose faint beams play
Among the drooping stars, kissing away
Their waning eyes to slumber. From the gaze,
Like snow-wreath at approach of vernal days,
The moon's pale circlet melts into the gray.
Glad Ocean quivers to the gentle gleams
Of rosy light that touch his glorious brow,
And murmurs joy with all his thousand streams ;
And Earth's fair face is mantling with a glow,
Like youthful Beauty's, in its changeful hue,
When slumbers, rich with dreams, are bidding her adieu.

JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

I.

TO JAMES DODDS AND JOHN HUNTER.

(Arcades Ambo.)

SWEET pair of doves ! The mystic notes that stirred
Dodona's groves with oracles from Jove
Gave not a sweeter voice. Were I a bird,
I'd sing with you of joy and peace and love,
And nests on earth more blest than halls in heaven ;
But me a sterner power inspires : like car
With fiery breath and brazen snortings driven
O'er groaning rails and white smoke wreathing far,
My joy is action, and my music blasts
Of high-spurred energy that scorns delay :
Rock in your pleasure-boats ! 'T is well. With masts
Sore-straining 'neath the gale I dash the spray :
Your souls in CRAIGCROOK'S warbling heaven shall
 dwell ;
Mine drives from earth the harnessed Devil to hell !

II.

HIGHLAND SOLITUDE.

IN the lone glen the silver lake doth sleep ;
Sleeps the white cloud upon the sheer black hill :
All moorland sounds a solemn silence keep ;
I only hear the tiny trickling rill
'Neath the red moss. Athwart the dim gray pall
That veils the day a dusky fowl may fly ;
But, on this bleak brown moor, if thou shalt call
For men, a spirit will sooner make reply.
Come hither, thou whose agile mind doth flit
From talk to talk, and tempt the pensive mood.
Converse with men makes sharp the glittering wit,
But God to man doth speak in solitude.
Come, sit thee down upon this old gray stone ;
Men learn to think, and feel, and pray, alone.

III.

AT LOCH ERICHT.

No railways ! — thank Heaven at length I 'm free
From travelling cockneys, wondering at a hill,
From lisping ladies, who from huge towns flee,
To nurse feigned raptures at a tumbling rill !
From large hotels and finely-furnished inns,
With all things but pure kindness in their plan,
And from sleek waiters, whose obsequious grins
Do make me loathe the very face of man !
Smooth modern age, which no rough line doth mar,
All men must praise thy very decent law !
But in this bothie I am happier far,
Where I must feed on oats, and sleep on straw.
For why ? Here men look forth from honest faces,
And are what thing they seem, without grimaces.

IV.

BEN MUICHDHUI.

O'ER broad Muichdhuì sweeps the keen cold blast ;
Far whirrs the snow-bred, white-winged ptarmigan ;
Sheer sink the cliffs to dark Loch Etagan,
And all the hill with shattered rock lies waste.
Here brew ship-foundering storms their force divine ;
Here gush the fountains of wild-flooding rivers ;
Here the strong thunder frames the bolt that shivers
The giant strength of the old twisted pine.
Yet, even here, on the bare waterless brow
Of granite ruin, I found a purple flower,
A delicate flower, as fair as aught, I trow,
That toys with zephyrs in my lady's bower.
So Nature blends her powers ; and he is wise
Who to his strength no gentlest grace denies.

V.

THE STATUE OF ALBERT DÜRER AT NÜRNBERG

SOLID and square doth master Albert stand,
An air of hardy well-proved thought he wears,
As one that never flinched ; and in his hand
The cunning tools of his high art he bears.
From thy grave face severe instructions come ;
The peace that 's born of well-fought fights is thine
Before thy look frivolity is dumb,
And each true workman feels his craft divine.
First-born of Jove, immortal Toil ! by thee
This city rose, by thee, so quaintly fair,
It stands, with well-hewn stone in each degree,
Turret, and spire, and carvéd gable rare.
Toil shaped the worlds ; and on Earth's fruitful sod
Man works, a fellow-laborer with God.

VI.

WEIMAR.

THOU little Weimar, in the Saxon land,
All hail ! With little Palestine and Greece
Well sistered, thou dost use a wide command,
And pile thy thoughtful trophies where fair Peace
Her bloodless victories tells. A common place
And common streets I see ; but where we stand
The gods once walked ; and now an humble race
Lives on the memory of that Titan band.
Such the high function of God's elect men, —
To fill time with their presence, and inspire
The many with strong will, and loftier ken,
And elevate our lives with a faith higher
Than our poor selves. O Heavenly Father, give
This faith to me ! By this the righteous live.

VII.

BERLIN.

STATUES on statues piled, and in the hand
Of each memorial man a soldier's sword !
Fit emblem of a tame and subject land,
Mustered and marked by a drill-sergeant-lord.
And these long lines of formal streets, that go
In rank and file, by a great captain's skill
Were marched into this cold and stately show,
Where public order palsies private will.
Order is strong ; strong law the stars commands ;
But birds by wings, and thought by freedom lives ;
The crystallised stone compact and foursquare stands,
But man by surging self-born impulse strives.
Much have ye done, lords of exact Berlin,
But one thing fails, — the soul to your machine !

VIII.

LOCH ERICHT.

THE lake is smooth ; the air is soft and still ;
The water shines with a broad lambent gleam ;
And the white cloud sleeps on the hoary hill,
With the mild glory of a sainted dream.
From the steep crag the distant bleatings come
Of sheep far-straggling o'er the turfy way ;
And the harsh torrent, softened to a hum,
Gives murmurous music from the stony brae.
If here on earth a heaven may be, thou hast
Heaven here to-day ; now give thy soul repose.
To-morrow, down this glen the ruffian blast
May sweep, while high the enchaféd billow throws
Its surly might, and smites the sounding shore,
And the swollen rills rush down with thunderous roar !

AMERICAN SONNETS.





AMERICAN SONNETS.

COLONEL DAVID HUMPHREYS.*

I.

THE SOUL.



Y heaven-born soul ! by body unconfined,
Leave that low tenement and roam abroad ;
Forestall the time, when, left each clog behind,

Thy flight shall mount where never mortal trod.
Even now, methinks, upborne in trancéd dreams,
The disencumbered essence tries its wings,
Sees better planets, basks in brighter beams,
To purer sight mysterious symbols brings,
Of unconceived, unutterable things.
Though dust returned to dust the worms devour,
Thee can dread Death annihilate or bind ?
There, King of Terrors ! stops thy dreaded power ;
The bright assurgent, from all dross refined,
High o'er the immense of space regains the world of mind.

* Born 1753 ; died 1818.

II.

ADDRESSED TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE PRINCE OF
BRAZIL, ON TAKING LEAVE OF THE COURT OF LISBON,
JULY, 1797.

FAREWELL, ye flowery fields ! where Nature's hand
Profusely sheds her vegetable store,

Nurtured by genial suns and zephyrs bland !

Farewell, thou Tagus ! and thy friendly shore :

Long shall my soul thy lost retreats deplore,

Thy haunts where shades of heroes met my eyes.

As oft I mused where Camoens trod before,

I saw the god-like form of Gama rise,

With chiefs renowned beneath your eastern skies.

O, long may peace and glory crown thy scene !

Farewell, just Prince ! no sycophantic lay

Insults thy ear. Be what thy sires have been,

Thy great progenitors ! who oped the way

Through seas unsailed before to climes of orient day.

RICHARD BINGHAM DAVIS.*

I.

TO MUSIC.

YES, I must bid thy ecstasies farewell,
Sweet soother of my soul ! no more thy power,
That oft has beamed upon the gloomy hour,
Shall fold my spirit in ethereal spell.

No more I'll watch thee, wafted on the wing
Of fragrant eve, from the lone warbler's throat ;
No more I'll hear thee touch the expressive string,
Or swell with softening grace the airy note.

Past is thy charm that could my bosom thrill,
That name, on thy soft undulations borne,
Which fancy heard in each delightful thrill —
Eliza's name is from my bosom torn,
And when Eliza dwells not in the strain,
Thy sweetest notes are harsh, my energies in vain.

* Born 1771 ; died 1799.

II.

TO THE SETTING MOON.

MUSING in meditation's charmed dream,
Joyless I see thy placid radiance fade,
Hid by the dusky hills, whose humid shade
Quenches thy lustre floating in the stream.

How great the contrast from thy cheerful light !
How deep, how silent is the sudden gloom !
Still, as the sullen vapors of the night,
Dark, as the shade that wraps the haunted tomb !

'T is thus thy phantoms, Hope, delusive sweep
Along the shades of life, while fancy dwells
Fond on the prospect, — sudden burst the spells,
And leave the disappointed wretch to weep ;
While the fond memory of past delight
Deepens the gloom of desperation's night !

III.

TO FELICIA, ON HER RETURN TO NEW YORK.

WHEN, through the dark damp mists of tedious night,
Sweet lucid tints announce the cheerful day,
Gay beats the enthusiast heart that hails the ray
Illuminating scenes of new delight.

When, the long dreary reign of Winter past,
The landscape brightens, and the wild-flowers bloom ;
When every gale wafts music and perfume,
Rich is the fancy's treasure, sweet the soul's repast.

Such, in the circle where Felicia shines,
Are Friendship's feelings on her blest return ;
Friendship — who for her loss no more repines,
But bids each anxious bosom cease to mourn.
To hail Felicia is our sweet employ,
And every sense and every heart is joy.

I.

ROBERT TREAT PAINE.

TO BELINDA.

PATHETIC chantress ! Nature's feeling child !

Thou, like thy parent, rul'st a varied sphere,
Where judgment ripens, fancy blossoms wild ;

Thy page the landscape, and thy mind the year.

Oft in the rainbow's heaven-enchasing beams,

Thy hand, sweet limner, many a pencil dips ;
And oft receive Piera's sacred streams
New inspiration from Belinda's lips.

Pure, as the bosom of the virgin rose,

Blooms the rich verdure of a heart sincere ;
And e'en Belinda's smile more radiant glows,
Through the clear mirror of a pearly tear.

But ah ! her lyre in hushed oblivion sleeps,

While Edwin mourns, and all Parnassus weeps !

II.

TO THE COUNTRY GIRL.

HASTE, Zephyr, fly, and waft to Anna's ear
This bosom echo, — 't is my heart's reply ;
Say, to her notes I listened with a tear,
And caught the sweet contagion of a " sigh."

But ah ! that " last adieu ! " oh ! stern request !
Cold, as those tides of vital ice that roll
Through the chilled channels of her maiden breast,
When prudish sanctity congeals the soul.

O'er Fancy's fairy lawn no more we rove ;
No more, in Rhyme's imperious hood arrayed,
Hold airy converse in the Muse's grove,
While you a shadow seemed, and I a shade.

For know, Menander can thy features trace,
Nor more thy verse admire than idolize thy face.

III.

TO ANNA LOUISA, ON HER ODE TO FANCY.

SAY, child of Phœbus and the eldest Grace,
Whose lyre melodious, and enchanting face,
The blended title of thy birth proclaim ;
Say, lovely Naiad of Castalia's streams,
Why thus thy Muse on Fiction's pillow dreams,
And fondly wooes the rainbow-mantled Dame ?
When stern Misfortune, with her Gorgon frown,
Congeals the fairy face of Bliss to stone,
Hope to the horns of Fancy's altar flies ;
But what gay nun would seek asylum there,
When Beauty, Love, and Fortune crown the fair,
And Hymen's temple greets her raptured eyes ?
Then haste, sweet Nymph, to bless the ardent youth ;
Then, Fancy, " blush to be excelled by Truth."

IV.

ELEGIAC SONNET,

Inscribed to the Memory of M. M. HAYS, Esq.

HERE sleep'st thou, Man of Soul ! Thy spirit flown,
How dark and tenantless its desert clay !
Cold is that heart, which throbbed at sorrow's moan,
Untuned that tongue that charmed the social day.

Where now the Wit, by generous roughness graced ?
Or Friendship's accent, kindling as it fell ?
Or Bounty's stealing foot, whose step untraced
Had watched pale Want, and stored her famished cell ?

Alas ! 't is all thou art ! whose vigorous mind
Inspiring force to Truth and Feeling gave,
Whose rich resources equal power combined,
The gay to brighten, and instruct the grave !

Farewell ! Adieu ! Sweet peace thy vigils keep ;
For Pilgrim Virtue sojourns here to weep !

V.

TO PHILENIA, ON A STANZA IN HER ADDRESS TO MYRA.*

THY "bosom bankrupt," fair Peru divine,
Of every mental gem, that e'er has shone,
In dazzled Fancy's intellectual mine,
Or ever spangled Virtue's radiant zone!

Thy "bosom bankrupt"! — Nature, sooner far,
Shall roll, exhausted, flowerless springs away,
Leave the broad eye of noon without a ray,
And strip the path to heaven of every star.

Thy "bosom bankrupt"! — Ah! those sorrows cease
Which taught us how to weep, and how admire;
The tear that falls to soothe thy wounded peace,
With rapture glistens o'er thy matchless lyre.
Ind and Golconda, in one *firm* combined,
Shall sooner bankrupt than Philenia's mind.

* The stanza which suggested this sonnet is highly encomiastic on Mr. Paine. It is here given from the "Massachusetts Magazine" of February, 1793:—

"Since first Affliction's dreary frown
Gloomed the bright summer of my days,
Ne'er has my bankrupt bosom known
A solace like his peerless praise."

WASHINGTON ALLSTON.

I.

ON A FALLING GROUP, IN THE LAST JUDGMENT OF
MICHAEL ANGELO.

How vast, how dread, o'erwhelming is the thought
Of space interminable ! to the soul
A circling weight that crushes into naught
Her mighty faculties ! a wondrous whole,
Without or parts, beginning, or an end !
How fearful then on desp'rate wings to send
The fancy e'en amid the waste profound !
Yet, born as if all daring to astound,
Thy giant hand, O ANGELO, hath hurled
E'en human forms, with all their mortal weight,
Down the dread void, — fall endless as their fate !
Already now they seem from world to world
For ages thrown ; yet doomed, another past,
Another still to reach, nor e'er to reach the last !

II.

ON REMBRANDT, OCCASIONED BY HIS PICTURE OF JACOB'S
DREAM.

As in that twilight, superstitious age,
When all beyond the narrow grasp of mind
Seemed fraught with meanings of supernal kind,
When e'en the learned philosophic sage,
Wont with the stars through boundless space to range,
Listened with reverence to the changeling's tale ;
E'en so, thou strangest of all beings strange !
E'en so thy visionary scenes I hail ;
That, like the rambling of an idiot's speech,
No image giving of a thing on earth,
Nor thought significant in reason's reach,
Yet in their random shadowings give birth
To thoughts and things from other worlds that come,
And fill the soul, and strike the reason dumb.

III.

ON SEEING THE PICTURE OF ÆOLUS, BY PELLEGRINO
TIBALDI.

FULL well, Tibaldi, did thy kindred mind
The mighty spell of Buonarroti own.
Like one who, reading magic words, receives
The gift of intercourse with worlds unknown,
'T was thine, deciph'ring Nature's mystic leaves,
To hold strange converse with the viewless wind ;
To see the spirits, in embodied forms
Of gales and whirlwinds, hurricanes and storms.
For, lo ! obedient to thy bidding, teems
Fierce into shape their stern, relentless lord ;
His form of motion ever-restless seems ;
Or, if to rest inclined his turbid soul,
On Hecla's top to stretch, and give the word
To subject winds that sweep the desert pole.

IV.

ON THE DEATH OF COLERIDGE.

AND thou art gone, most loved, most honored friend !
No, nevermore thy gentle voice shall blend
With air of earth its pure ideal tones,
Binding in one, as with harmonious zones,
The heart and intellect. And I no more
Shall with thee gaze on that unfathomed deep,
The human soul ; as when, pushed off the shore,
Thy mystic bark would through the darkness sweep,
Itself the while so bright ! For oft we seemed
As on some starless sea, — all dark above,
All dark below, — yet, onward as we drove,
To plough up light that ever round us streamed.
But he who mourns is not as one bereft
Of all he loved : — thy living truths are left.

V.

ON A STATUE OF AN ANGEL, BY BENAÎMÉ, OF ROME, IN
THE POSSESSION OF J. S. COPLEY GREEN, ESQ.

O, who can look on that celestial face,
And kindred for it claim with aught on earth?
If ever here more lovely form had birth —
No, never that supernal purity, — that grace
So eloquent of unimpassioned love!
That, by a simple movement, thus imparts
Its own harmonious peace, the while our hearts
Rise, as by instinct, to the world above.
And yet we look on cold, unconscious stone.
But what is *that* which thus our spirits own
As Truth and Life? 'T is not material Art,
But e'en the sculptor's soul to sense unsealed.
O, never may he doubt — its witness so revealed —
There lives within him an immortal part!

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

I.

OCTOBER.

Ay, thou art welcome, heaven's delicious breath,
When woods begin to wear the crimson leaf,
And suns grow meek, and the meek suns grow brief,
And the year smiles as it draws near its death.
Wind of the sunny South ! O, still delay
In the gay woods and in the golden air,
Like to a good old age released from care,
Journeying, in long serenity, away.
In such a bright, late quiet, would that I
Might wear out life like thee, 'mid bowers and brooks,
And, dearer yet, the sunshine of kind looks,
And music of kind voices ever nigh ;
And when my last sand twinkled in the glass,
Pass silently from men, as thou dost pass.

II.

MIDSUMMER.

A POWER is on the earth and in the air,
From which the vital spirit shrinks afraid,
And shelters him in nooks of deepest shade,
From the hot steam and from the fiery glare.
Look forth upon the earth, — her thousand plants
Are smitten ; even the dark sun-loving maize
Faints in the field beneath the torrid blaze ;
The herd beside the shaded fountain pants ;
For life is driven from all the landscape brown ;
The bird hath sought his tree, the snake his den,
The trout floats dead in the hot stream, and men
Drop by the sun-stroke in the populous town :
As if the Day of Fire had dawned, and sent
Its deadly breath into the firmament.

III.

NOVEMBER.

YET one smile more, departing, distant Sun !

One mellow smile through the soft vapory air,
Ere, o'er the frozen earth, the loud winds run,

Or snows are sifted o'er the meadows bare,
One smile on the brown hills and naked trees,

And the dark rocks whose summer wreaths are cast,
And the blue gentian flower, that, in the breeze,
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last.

Yet a few sunny days, in which the bee

Shall murmur by the hedge that skirts the way,
The cricket chirp upon the russet lea,
And man delight to linger in thy ray.

Yet one rich smile, and we will try to bear

The piercing winter frost, and winds, and darkened air.

IV.

CONSUMPTION.

Ay, thou art for the grave ; thy glances shine
Too brightly to shine long ; another Spring
Shall deck her for men's eyes, but not for thine —
Sealed in a sleep that knows no wakening.
The fields for thee have no medicinal leaf,
And the vexed ore no mineral of power ;
And they who love thee wait in anxious grief
Till the slow plague shall bring the fatal hour.
Glide softly to thy rest, then. Death should come
Gently to one of gentle mould like thee,
As light winds wandering through groves of bloom
Detach the delicate blossom from the tree.
Close thy sweet eyes, calmly, and without pain ;
And we will trust in God to see thee yet again.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

I.

AUTUMN.

THOU comest, Autumn, heralded by the rain,
With banners, by great gales incessant fanned,
Brighter than brightest silks of Samarcand,
And stately oxen harnessed to thy wain !
Thou standest, like imperial Charlemagne,
Upon thy bridge of gold ; thy royal hand
Outstretched with benedictions o'er the land,
Blessing the farms through all thy vast domain.
Thy shield is the red harvest-moon, suspended
So long beneath the heaven's o'erhanging eaves ;
Thy steps are by the farmer's prayers attended ;
Like flames upon an altar shine the sheaves ;
And, following thee, in thy ovation splendid,
Thine almoner, the wind, scatters the golden leaves !

. II.

DANTE.

TUSCAN, that wanderest through the realms of gloom,
With thoughtful pace, and sad, majestic eyes,
Stern thoughts and awful from thy soul arise,
Like Farinata from his fiery tomb.
Thy sacred song is like the trump of doom ;
Yet in thy heart what human sympathies,
What soft compassion glows, as in the skies
The tender stars their clouded lamps relume !
Methinks I see thee stand, with pallid cheeks,
By Fra Hilario in his diocese,
As up the convent-walls, in golden streaks,
The ascending sunbeams mark the day's decrease ;
And, as he asks what there the stranger seeks,
Thy voice along the cloister whispers, " Peace ! "

III. •

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

From the Spanish of Lope de Vega.

SHEPHERD ! that with thine amorous, sylvan song
Hast broken the slumber which encompassed me, —
That mad'st thy crook from the accurséd tree,
On which thy powerful arms were stretched so long !
Lead me to mercy's ever-flowing fountains ;
For thou my shepherd, guard, and guide shalt be ;
I will obey thy voice, and wait to see
Thy feet all beautiful upon the mountains.
Hear, Shepherd ! — thou who for thy flock art dying,
O, wash away these scarlet sins, for thou
Rejoicest at the contrite sinner's vow.
O, wait ! — to thee my weary soul is crying, —
Wait for me ! — Yet why ask it, when I see,
With feet nailed to the cross, thou 'rt waiting still for me !

IV.

THE BROOK.

From the Spanish.

LAUGH of the mountain ! — lyre of bird and tree !
Pomp of the meadow ! mirror of the morn !
The soul of April, unto whom are born
The rose and jessamine, leaps wild in thee !
Although, where'er thy devious current strays,
The lap of earth with gold and silver teems,
To me thy clear proceeding brighter seems
Than golden sands, that charm each shepherd's gaze.
How without guile thy bosom, all transparent
As the pure crystal, lets the curious eye
Thy secrets scan, thy smooth, round pebbles count !
How, without malice murmuring, glides thy current !
O sweet simplicity of days gone by !
Thou shunn'st the haunts of man, to dwell in limpid fount.

JAMES GATES PERCIVAL.

I.

THE POET.

DEEP sunk in thought, he sat beside the river,
Its wave in liquid lapses glided by,
Nor watched, in crystal depth, his vacant eye
The willow's high o'erarching foliage quiver.
From dream to shadowy dream returning ever,
He sat, like statue, on the grassy verge ;
His thoughts, a phantom train, in airy surge
Streamed visionary onward, pausing never.
As autumn wind, in mountain forest weaving
Its wondrous tapestry of leaf and bower,
O'ermastering the night's resplendent flower
With tints, like hues of heaven, the eye deceiving ;
So, lost in labyrinthine maze, he wove
A wreath of flowers ; the golden thread was love.

II.

NIGHT.

AM I not all alone ? — The world is still

In passionless slumber, — not a tree but feels

The far-pervading hush, and softer steals

The misty river by. Yon broad bare hill

Looks coldly up to heaven, and all the stars

Seem eyes deep fixed in silence, as if bound

By some unearthly spell, — no other sound

But the owl's unfrequent moan. — Their airy cars

The winds have stationed on the mountain peaks.

Am I not all alone ? — A spirit speaks

From the abyss of night, “ Not all alone :

Nature is round thee with her banded powers,

And ancient genius haunts thee in these hours ;

Mind and its kingdom now are all thine own.”

III.

WINTER is now around me, and the snow
Has thrown its mantle over herb, tree, flower ;
The icicle has tapestried the bower,
And in a crystal sheet the rivers flow ;
And mustering from the north, at evening blow
The hollow winds, and through the star-lit hour
Shake from the icy wood a rattling shower,
That tinkles on the glassy crust below ;
And Morning rises in a saffron glow,
Pouring her splendor through the fretted grove,
In tints that round the heart enchantment throw,
Like what the Graces in their girdle wove ;
And shining on the mountain's frosted brow,
That o'er the gilded landscape looks afar,
Her kindling beams the virgin mantle strow
With drops of gold that twinkle like a star !

IV.

THE blue heaven spreads before me with its keen
And countless eyes of brightness, — worlds are there, —
The boldest spirit cannot spring, and dare
The peopled universe that burns between
This earth and nothing. Thought can wing its way
Swifter than lightning-flashes or the beam
That hastens on the pinions of the morn ;
But quicker than the glowing dart of day
It tires, and faints along the starry stream, —
A wave of suns through countless ether borne,
Though infinite, eternal ! yet one power
Sits on the Almighty Centre, whither tend
All worlds, and beings from time's natal hour,
Till suns and all their satellites shall end.

JONES VERY.

I.

THE ROBIN.

THOU need'st not flutter from thy half-built nest,
Whene'er thou hear'st man's hurrying feet go by,
Fearing his eye for harm may on thee rest,
Or he thy young unfinished cottage spy ;
All will not heed thee on that swinging bough,
Nor care that round thy shelter spring the leaves,
Nor watch thee on the pool's wet margin now,
For clay to plaster straws thy cunning weaves ;
All will not hear thy sweet outpouring joy,
That with morn's stillness blends the voice of song ;
For over-anxious cares their souls employ,
That else upon thy music borne along,
And the light wings of heart-ascending prayer,
Had learned that Heaven is pleased thy simple joys to
share.

•

II.

MORNING.

THE light will never open sightless eyes,
It comes to those who willingly would see ;
And every object, hill, and stream, and skies,
Rejoice within the encircling line to be ;
'T is day : the field is filled with busy hands,
The shop resounds with noisy workmen's din,
The traveller with his staff all ready stands
His yet unmeasured journey to begin ;
The light breaks gently too within the breast, —
Yet there no eye awaits the crimson morn,
The forge and noisy anvil are at rest,
Nor men nor oxen tread the fields of corn,
Nor pilgrim lifts his staff, — it is no day
To those who find on earth their place to stay.

III.

THY BEAUTY FADES.

THY beauty fades, and with it too my love,
For 't was the selfsame stalk that bore its flower ;
Soft fell the rain, and breaking from above
The sun looked out upon our nuptial hour ;
And I had thought forever by thy side
With bursting buds of hope in youth to dwell ;
But one by one Time strewed thy petals wide,
And every hope's wan look a grief can tell :
For I had thoughtless lived beneath his sway,
Who like a tyrant dealeth with us all,
Crowning each rose, though rooted on decay,
With charms that shall the spirit's love enthrall,
And for a season turn the soul's pure eyes
From virtue's changeless bloom, that time and death
defies.

•

IV.

THE SPIRIT-LAND.

FATHER ! thy wonders do not singly stand,
Nor far removed where feet have seldom strayed ;
Around us ever lies the enchanted land,
In marvels rich to thine own sons displayed ;
In finding thee are all things round us found ;
In losing thee are all things lost beside :
Ears have we, but in vain strange voices sound,
And to our eyes the vision is denied ;
We wander in the country far remote,
'Mid tombs and ruined piles in death to dwell ;
Or on the records of past greatness dote,
And for a buried soul the living sell ;
While on our path bewildered falls the night ;
That ne'er returns us to the fields of light.

GEORGE HILL.

I.

LIBERTY.

THERE is a spirit working in the world,
Like to a silent subterranean fire ;
Yet, ever and anon, some monarch, hurled
Aghast and pale, attests its fearful ire.
The dungeoned nations now once more respire
The keen and stirring air of Liberty.
The struggling giant wakes, and feels he's free.
By Delphi's fountain-cave, that ancient choir
Resume their song ; the Greek astonished hears,
And the old altar of his worship rears.
Sound on, fair sisters ! sound your boldest lyre, —
Peal your old harmonies as from the spheres !
Unto strange gods too long we've bent the knee,
The trembling mind, too long and patiently.

II.

SPRING.

Now Heaven seems one bright, rejoicing eye ;
And Earth her sleeping vesture flings aside,
And with a blush awakes as does a bride ;
And Nature speaks, like thee, in melody.
The forest, sunward, glistens, green and high ;
The ground each moment, as some blossom springs,
Puts forth, as does thy cheek, a lovelier dye ;
And each new morning some new songster brings.
And, hark ! the brooks their rocky prisons break,
And echo calls on echo to awake,
Like nymph to nymph. The air is rife with wings,
Rustling through wood or dripping over lake.
Herb, bud, and bird return, — but not to me
With song or beauty, since they bring not thee.

PARK BENJAMIN.

I.

FLOWERS LOVE'S TRUEST LANGUAGE.

FLOWERS are Love's truest language ; they betray,
Like the divining-rods of Magi old,
Where precious wealth lies buried, not of gold,
But love, — strong love, that never can decay !
I send thee flowers, O dearest ! and I deem
That from their petals thou wilt hear sweet words,
Whose music, clearer than the voice of birds,
When breathed to thee alone, perchance, may seem
All eloquent of feelings unexpressed.
O, wreathe them in those tresses of dark hair !
Let them repose upon thy forehead fair,
And on thy bosom's yielding snow be pressed !
Thus shall thy fondness for my flowers reveal
The love that maiden coyness would conceal !

II.

THE STARS.

WHAT marvel is it, that, in other lands
And ancient days, men worshipped the divine
And brilliant majesty of stars that shine
Pure in their lofty spheres, like angel-bands?
With a deep reverence, when evening came,
With her high train of shadows, have I bowed
Beneath the heaven, as each new-lighted flame
Glowed in the sapphire free from mist or cloud :
A holy presence seemed to fill the air,
Invisible spirits, such as live in dreams,
Came floating down on their celestial beams,
And from my heart there rose a silent prayer.
What marvel, then, that men of yore could see
In each bright star a glorious deity?

III.

SPRING.

THE birds sing cheerily, the streamlets shout
As if in echo ; tones are all around :
The air is filled with one pervading sound
Of merriment. Bright creatures flit about ;
Slight spears of emerald glitter from the ground,
And frequent flowers, like helms of bloom, are found ;
And, from the invisible army of fair things,
Floats a low murmur like a distant sea !
I hear the clarions of the insect-kings
Marshal their busy cohorts on the lea.
Life, life in action, — 't is all music, all,
From the enlivening cry of children free
To the swift dash of waters as they fall,
Released by thee, O Spring, to glad, wild liberty !

IV.

TWILIGHT.

CALM twilight ! in thy mild and silent time,
When summer flowers their perfume shed around,
And naught, save the deep, solitary sound
Of some far bell, is heard, with solemn chime
Tolling for vespers, or the evening bird
Pouring sweet music o'er the woodland glade,
As if to viewless sprites and fairies played,
Who join in dances when the strain is heard :
Then thoughts of those beloved and dearest come
Like sweetest hues upon the shadowed wave ;
And joys, that blossomed in the bowers of home,
The dews of memory with freshness lave.
O, that my last daybeam of life would shine,
Serenely beautiful, calm hour, as thine !

V.

(Written in view of the harbor of New York from the banks of the North River,
on the loveliest and calmest of the last days of autumn.)

Is this a painting? Are those pictured clouds
Which on the sky so movelessly repose?
Has some rare artist fashioned forth the shrouds
Of yonder vessel? Are these imaged shows
Of outline, figure, form, or is there life —
Life with a thousand pulses — in the scene
We gaze upon? Those towering banks between,
E'er tossed these billows in tumultuous strife?
Billows! there's not a wave! the waters spread
One broad, unbroken mirror! all around
Is hushed to silence — silence so profound
That a bird's carol, or an arrow sped
Into the distance, would, like larum bell,
Jar the deep stillness and dissolve the spell!

VI.

A STORM IN AUTUMN.

OFF in the West there is a sea of blue : —

While gloomiest vapors, clustering on high,

Tell that the hour of storm is drawing nigh ;

For dark they rise, and darker to the view.

O, coldly from the East careers the gale, —

Sharp as adversity, or the pang of grief

Which sears the heart like Autumn's withered leaf

When those we love in their affection fail.

Now from the scattering mists, relentless Rain

Falls in chill drops, precursors of the shower

That soon will prostrate the unsheltered flower,

Blooming of late securely on the plain.

It comes ! in sudden gusts it rushes down ;

And angry clouds o'er all the landscape frown !

VII.

DOMESTIC LOVE.

WHEN those we love are present to the sight,
When those we love hear fond affection's words,
The heart is cheerful, as in morning light
The merry song of early-wakened birds :
And, oh ! the atmosphere of home — how bright
It floats around us, when we sit together
Under a bower of vine in summer weather,
Or round the hearthstone on a winter's night !
This is a picture not by Fancy drawn : —
The eve of life contrasted with its dawn ;
A gray-haired man, — a girl with sunny eyes ;
He seems to speak, and, laughing, she replies :
While father, mother, brothers smile to see
How fair their rosebud blooms beneath the parent tree !

VIII.

THE SAME.

WHEN those we love are absent — far away,
When those we love have met some hapless fate,
How pours the heart its lone and plaintive lay,
As the wood-songster mourns her stolen mate !
Alas ! the summer bower — how desolate !
The winter hearth — how dim its fire appears !
While the pale memories of by-gone years
Around our thoughts like spectral shadows wait.
How changed the picture ! here, they all are parted
To meet no more, — the true, the gentle-hearted !
The old have journeyed to their bourne ; the young
Wander, if living, distant lands among ;
And now we rest our dearest hopes above ;
For heavenly joy alone can match domestic love !

IX.

SNOW.

FROM their innumerable breasts and wings —
All undiscerned by these our mortal eyes,
Hid in the folds of yonder misty skies,
More like imagined sprites than real things —
Celestial doves are shedding their white plumes,
And the whole land is covered with a shower
Of motes as fair as is an unsunned flower
Which, when it opens, yields its short-lived blooms
Vestured all over like a bride in white,
But colder than a corpse within its shroud ;
The earth sleeps sparkling in the silver light
Of the soft snow, which, like a feathery cloud,
Still falls, as gently as Hope's dreams, or Love's,
From the pure forms of those celestial doves.

X.

TO A LADY.

'T is winter now, — but spring will blossom soon,
And flowers will lean to the embracing air,
And the young buds will vie with them to share
Each zephyr's soft caress ; and when the Moon
Bends her new silver bow, as if to fling
Her arrowy lustre through some vapor's wing,
The streamlets will return the glance of night
From their pure, gliding mirrors, set by spring
Deep in rich frames of clustering chrysolite,
Instead of winter's crumbled sparks of white.

So, dearest ! shall our loves, though frozen now,
By cold unkindness, bloom like buds and flowers,
Like fountain's flash, for Hope with smiling brow
Tells of a spring whose sweets shall all be ours !

HENRY THEODORE TUCKERMAN.

I.

FREEDOM.

FREEDOM ! beneath thy banner I was born.

O, let me share thy full and perfect life !

Teach me opinion's slavery to scorn,

And to be free from passion's bitter strife ;

Free of the world, a self-dependent soul,

Nourished by lofty aims and genial truth,

And made more free by love's serene control,

The spell of beauty and the hopes of youth :

The liberty of Nature let me know,

Caught from her mountains, groves, and crystal
streams ;

Her starry host, and sunset's purple glow,

That woo the spirit with celestial dreams,

On fancy's wing exultingly to soar,

Till life's harsh fetters clog the heart no more !

II.

ON A LANDSCAPE, BY BACKHUYSEN.

Not for the eye alone are here outspread
Skies, fields, and herds in such divine repose ;
The soul of beauty that to these is wed
Through the fair landscape tremulously glows !
We seem to feel the meadow's grateful air,
Hear the low breathing of the dreamy kine,
And the pure fragrance of the harvest share,
Until our hearts all cold distrust resign,
Feeling once more to truth and love allied ;
And, while the fresh tranquillity we view,
Each good they have foretold and life denied,
Hope's sweetest promises again renew ;
As if the twilight angel hovered there,
To waft from nature's rest a balm for human care.

III.

TO JENNY LIND.

A MELODY with Southern passion fraught
I hear thee warble : 't is as if a bird
By intuition human strains had caught,
But whose pure breast no kindred feeling stirred :
Thy native song the hushed arena fills,
So wildly plaintive that I seem to stand
Alone, and see, from off the circling hills,
The bright horizon of the North expand !
High art is thus intact ; and matchless skill
Born of intelligence and self-control, —
The graduated tone and perfect trill
Prove a restrained, but not a frigid soul ;
Thine finds expression in such generous deeds,
That music from thy lips for human sorrow pleads !

IV.

DESOLATION.

THINK ye the desolate must live apart,
By solemn vows to convent-walls confined ?
Ah ! no ; with men may dwell the cloistered heart,
And in a crowd the isolated mind :
Tearless behind the prison-bars of fate,
The world sees not how desolate they stand,
Gazing so fondly through the iron grate
Upon the promised yet forbidden land ;
Patience, the shrine to which their bleeding feet
Day after day in voiceless penance turn ;
Silence, the holy cell and calm retreat,
In which unseen their meek devotions burn :
Life is to them a vigil, which none share,
Their hopes a sacrifice, their love a prayer.

V.

TO ONE DECEIVED.

ALL hearts are not disloyal ; let thy trust
Be deep and clear and all-confiding still ;
For though Love's fruit turn on the lips to dust,
She ne'er betrays her child to lasting ill :
Through leagues of desert must the pilgrim go
Ere on his gaze the holy turrets rise ;
Through the long sultry day the stream must flow
Ere it can mirror twilight's purple skies.
Fall back unscathed from contact with the vain,
Keep thy robes white, thy spirit bold and free,
And calmly launch affection's bark again,
Hopeful of golden spoils reserved for thee.
Though lone the way as that already trod,
Cling to thine own integrity and God !

VI.

LOVE SONNETS.

I.

O FOR a castle on a woodland height !

High mountains round, and a pure stream below,
Within all charms that tasteful hours invite,

Wise books of poesy and music's flow ; —

A grassy lawn through which to course our steeds,

A gothic chapel in seclusion reared,

Where we could solace find for holiest needs,

And grow by mutual rites the more endeared :

How such captivity alone with thee

Would lift to Paradise each passing day !

Then all revealed my patient love would be,

And thou couldst not a full response delay ;

For Truth makes holy Love's illusive dreams,

And their best promise constantly redeems.

VII.

LOVE SONNETS.

2.

THE rain-drops patter on the casement still,
So hushed the room, each faint watch-tick I hear,
The crackling of the embers seems to fill
This brooding quiet with an accent clear :
I've looked awhile upon the gifted page,
Glanced at the dingy roofs and leaden sky,
Or paced the floor my mind to disengage,
Chiding the languid hours as they fly ;
In vain ! the thought of thee o'ermasters all,
Now waking joy, and now a dark surmise,
As Memory spreads her banquet or her pall,
And bids me hopeless sink or gladsome rise :
On what bright wings these lonely hours would flee,
Dared I but feel that thou hast thought of me !

VIII.

LOVE SONNETS.

3.

THE buds have opened, and in leafy pride
Woo the soft winds of this capricious May ;
With a refreshing green the fields are dyed,
And clearer sparkles on the waters play.
All Nature speaks of boundless promise now,
In tones as sweet as thine, — her hand is laid
With a maternal greeting on my brow,
Until its fevered throbbings all are stayed ;
And I am fain to lie upon her breast,
Unconscious of the world, divorced from pain,
Drink from her rosy lips the balm of rest,
And be her glad and trustful child again :
But such fond dalliance claims a spirit free,
And all her spells are broken — without thee !

IX.

LOVE SONNETS.

4.

WHAT though our dream is broken? Yet again

Like a familiar angel it shall bear

Consoling treasures for these days of pain,

Such as they only who have grieved can share :

As unhived nectar for the bee to sip,

Lurks in each flower-cell which the spring-time brings,

As music rests upon the quiet lip,

And power to soar yet lives in folded wings;

So let the love on which our spirits glide

Flow deep and strong beneath its bridge of sighs,

No shadow resting on the latent tide

Whose heavenward current baffles human eyes,

Until we stand upon the holy shore,

And realms it prophesied at length explore.

WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS.

OBJECTS WHICH INFLUENCE THE AMBITIOUS NATURE.

I.

TROPHIES. — HOW PLANTED.

THE trophies which shine out for eager eyes,
In youth's first hour of progress, and delude
With promise dearest to ambitious mood,
Lie not within life's limits, but arise
Beyond the realm of sunset ; — phantoms bright
Glowing above the tomb, having their roots
Even in the worshipper's heart ; — from whence their fruits,
And all that thence grows precious to man's sight !
Thence, too, their power to lure from beaten ways
That Love hath set with flowers, and thence the spell,
'Gainst which the blood denied may ne'er rebel,
That leads to sleepless nights, and toilsome days,
And sacrifice of all those human joys
That to the ambitious nature seem but toys.

II.

WHERE PLANTED.

It is the error of the impatient heart
To hope undying gifts, even while the strife
Is worst ; and struggling 'gainst its mortal part,
The glorious Genius laboring still for life,
Springs even from death to birth ! 'T is from his tomb
The amaranth rises which must wreath his brow,
And crown his memory with unfading bloom ;
Rooted in best affections, it will grow,
Though watered by sad tears, and watched by pride
Made humble in rejection ! Love denied,
Shall tend it through all seasons, and shall give
Her never-failing tenderness, — though still
Be the proud spirit, and the unyielding will,
That through the mortal made the immortal live !

III.

THE TRIUMPH.

THE grave but ends the struggle ! — Follows then
The triumph, which, superior to the doom,
Grows loveliest, and looks best to mortal men,
Purple in beauty, towering o'er the tomb !
O, with the stoppage of the impulsive tide
That vexed the impatient heart with needful strife,
The soul that is Hope's living leaps to life,
And shakes her fragrant plumage far and wide !
Eyes follow then in worship which but late
Frowned in defiance ; — and the timorous herd
That sleekly waited for another's word
Grow bold at last to bring — obeying Fate —
The tribute of their praise but late denied, —
Tribute of homage which is sometimes — hate !

IV.

GLORY AND ENDURING FAME.

THUS Glory hath her being ! thus she stands
Star-crowned, — a high divinity of woe ;
Her temples fill, her columns crown all lands
Where lofty attribute is known below.
For her the smokes ascend, the waters flow,
The grave foregoes his prey, the soul goes free ;
The gray rock gives out music ; hearthstones grow
To temples at her word ; her footprints see
On ruins, that are thus made holiest shrines,
Where Love may win devotion, and the heart
That with the fire of genius inly pines
May find the guidance of a kindred art,
And from the branch of that eternal tree
Pluck fruits at once of death and immortality !

WILLIAM HENRY BURLEIGH.

I.

THE BROOK.

“ LIKE thee, O stream ! to glide in solitude
Noiselessly on, reflecting sun or star,
Unseen by man, and from the great world's jar
Kept evermore aloof ; methinks 't were good
To live thus lonely through the silent lapse
Of my appointed time.” Not wisely said,
Unthinking Quietest ! The brook hath sped
Its course for ages through the narrow gaps
Of rifted hills and o'er the reedy plain,
Or 'mid the eternal forests, not in vain ;
The grass more greenly groweth on its brink,
And lovelier flowers and richer fruits are there,
And of its crystal waters myriads drink
That else would faint beneath the torrid air.

II.

RAIN.

DASHING in big drops on the narrow pane,
And making mournful music for the mind,
While plays his interlude the wizard Wind,
I hear the ringing of the frequent rain :
How doth its dreamy tone the spirit lull,
Bringing a sweet forgetfulness of pain,
While busy thought calls up the past again,
And lingers 'mid the pure and beautiful
Visions of early childhood ! Sunny faces
Meet us with looks of love, and in the moans
Of the faint wind we hear familiar tones,
And tread again in old familiar places !
Such is thy power, O Rain ! the heart to bless,
Wiling the soul away from its own wretchedness !

JAMES DIXON.*

I.

TO A ROBIN.

SWEET Bird ! that, hidden by the dark green leaves,
Didst pour thy pleasant song at break of day,
Making glad music round my flower-wreathed eaves,
Why has thy gentle warbling died away ?
Come not the zephyrs from the sweet southwest
As freshly to thy leaf-embosomed nest ?
Less fragrant are the flowers of summer's prime ?
Or pin'st thou for thy far-off southern clime ?
Or is it that thy noisy young have flown,
Leaving their green home in the o'ershadowing tree,
That thus thou mournest desolate and lone,
Where once thy song burst forth so loud and free ?
Alas ! that summer's perfumed airs should bring
Sorrow to one like thee, so light of heart and wing !

* Born 1814.

II.

CONNECTICUT RIVER.

WANDERING 'mid flowery banks, or loud and hoarse
Foaming o'er rock and crag, all wild and free,
From the deep woods that hide thy shaded source,
To where thy waters mingle with the sea,
Beautiful River ! like a dream of love
Thy deep waves glide — blue as the sky above.
Bright are the happy homes along thy shores,
Shaded by drooping elms that kiss thy wave ;
And grassy banks, that bloom with gay wild-flowers,
Thy calm and murmuring waters gently lave ;
And warbling birds, with music sweet as thine,
Sing in the branches of the o'erhanging vine
 A song whose notes are with us evermore,
 Stealing our hearts away to wander by thy shore.

III.

SUNSET AFTER A STORM.

Lo ! where the mountains mingle with the sky
A breaking light in all the glowing west !
And slowly now its lustre spreads on high,
As the veiled sun sinks calmly to his rest :
The broken clouds are bathed in golden light,
That mingle sweetly with the sky's deep blue,
And, as the twilight fades, from heaven's far height
The first bright star of eve is shining through :
The low wind's voice falls gently on the ear,
And with it, to the lone and weary heart,
Comes a deep joy, that, could it ne'er depart,
Might make us sigh to dwell forever here :
It may not be ! E'en from such glorious skies,
O, who can tell how sad a morn may rise !

IV.

MOONLIGHT IN JUNE.

THOU hast a gentle ministry, O Moon !
Riding in solemn silence through the sky,
And gazing from thy trackless path on high
Upon the beauty of the leafy June :
On such a lovely night, I ween, as this,
ENDYMION felt thy pale lip's dewy kiss ;
For far around on every plain and hill,
In the soft gleaming of thy gleaming ray,
Flower, tree, and forest, breathless now and still,
Rest from the burning brightness of the day ;
Silence is over all. Yon murmuring rill
Alone leaps gladly on its tireless way :
In thy soft rays how beautiful is Night !
Like man's cloud-covered path, by woman's love made
bright !

V.

TO MRS. SIGOURNEY,

With a "Forget-me-not" from the grave of KEATS, on whose tombstone are inscribed these words :—

"HERE LIES ONE WHOSE NAME WAS WRIT IN WATER."

WANDERING in Rome, for thee a gift I sought :
Around me were the wonders of the past ;
And modern Art, on every side, had cast
Her gems of richest beauty. Yet methought
These were scarce worthy thee. At length I stood,
One Sabbath eve, beside the grave of KEATS ;
The turf was bright with flowers that gave their sweets
To the soft night-air, as in mournful mood :
Sad thoughts came o'er me, and I could have wept
That all the hopes that in the Poet's heart,
As in a sanctuary, had been kept,
Could fade so soon, and perish, and depart ;
I plucked this flower for thee, the Muses' happiest
daughter,
And joyed to think *thy name* should ne'er be "writ in
water."

REV. NORMAN PINNEY.*

I.

CALM Twilight ! in thy wild and stilly time,
When summer flowers their perfumes shed around,
And naught, save the deep, solitary sound
Of some far bell is heard, with solemn chime
Tolling for vespers, or the evening bird,
Carolling music in the shady grove,
Sweet as the pure outpourings of first love,
While not a leaf by Zephyr's breath is stirred, —
Bright thoughts of those beloved and dearest come,
Like sunset rays upon the azure wave ;
And joys which blossomed in the bower of home
The dews of memory with freshness lave.
O, that my last day-beams of life would shine,
As mildly beautiful, calm hour, as thine !

* Born at Simsbury in 1804.

II.

STILL unto thee, my brightest, fairest, best,
The wandering heart returns as the pure dove
Seeking in vain the olive-branch of love,
Nor finding peace save in its ark of rest.
My flight has been wide, o'er the tossing wave :
Nor bower, nor tree, nor mantling vine were there ;
And like rich pearls deep in their ocean cave,
Were hidden all things beautiful and fair.
Send me not forth again, though the fair sky
Smile o'er the green enamelling of earth ;
Bright joys again be clustered round the hearth,
And the air rife with breathing melody ;
Still to its resting-place the dove would flee ; —
Angel of beauty ! shall it dwell with thee ?

HUGH PETERS.*

I.

AD POETAS.

*Quod si me lyricis vatibus inseres,
Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.*

YE are a wise and goodly company ;
A very worthy noble brotherhood ;
Nectar your drink, ambrosia your food ;
Ye cannot fail of immortality !
When ye would sleep, sweet will your slumbering be ;
For Musa 'neath you spreads a couch of down,
Or airy gossamer with rose-leaves strewn,
Fit hovering place for dreams of phantasy ;
And when ye wake, if ye would music have,
For you Apollo wakes his echoing strings ;
Or would ye ride, Pegasus spreads his wings,
And off ye fly through air, o'er earth and wave !
O happy band ! I 'll " give you honor due,"
If ye will deign admit me of your crew !

* Born 1807 ; died 1831.

II.

TO THE MOON.

HAIL, "great Diana," "virgin Queen of night !"

"Pale, silent orb," "mild Luna," new or full,

Crescent or gibbous ! if thought not too dull,

List to the prayer of a poor rhyming wight !

Behold thy servant in a piteous plight !

My soul is sad, my coat is growing old ;

My heart is heavy, and my heels are cold ;

Both in and out I am a sorry sight ;

Ideas and ink are gone, — I cannot write, —

And when I could, they said I was a loon

For offering incense at thy shrine, O Moon !

They call me mad, and that unmans me quite :

Regina, hear me ! if I 'm not a dunce,

Moonstrike my brain, and make me so at once !

GEORGE H. BOKER.*

I.

I DO assure thee, love, each kiss of thine
Adds to my stature, makes me more a man,
Lightens my care, and draws the bitter wine
That I was drugged with, while my nature ran
Its slavish course. For didst not thou untwine
My cunning fetters? break the odious ban,
That quite debased me? free this heart of mine,
And deck my chains with roses? While I can
I'll chant thy praises, till the world shall ring
With thy great glory; and the heaping store
Of future honors, for the songs I sing,
Shall miss thy poet, at thy feet to pour
A juster tribute, as the gracious spring
Of my abundance. — Kiss me, then, once more.

* "Plays and Poems, by George H. Boker. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1856."

The sonnets by Mr. Boker are replete with the beauty and harmony of poetic diction, and his *love* sonnets are almost Shakespearian in their delicacy and plaintiveness. See the Essay on American Sonnets, I. 107-115, where five of his sonnets are already given.

II.

I SHALL be faithful, though the weary years
Spread out before me like a mountain chain
Rugged and steep, ascending from the plain,
Without a path ; though where the cliff uprears
Its sternest front, and echoes in my ears
My own deep sobs of solitary pain,
It is my fate to scale ; though all in vain
I spend my labor, and my idle tears
Torture but me : I know, despite my ill,
That with each step a little wastes away, —
A little of this life wastes day by day ;
And far beyond the desert which I fill
With my vast sorrow, I have faith to say
That we shall meet ; so I press onward still.

III.

THE AWAKING OF THE POETIC FACULTY.

ALL day I heard a humming in my ears,
A buzz of many voices, and a throng
Of swarming numbers, passing with a song
Measured and stately as the rolling spheres'.
I saw the sudden light of lifted spears,
Slanted at once against some monster wrong ;
And then a fluttering scarf which might belong
To some sweet maiden in her morn of years.
I felt the chilling damp of sunless glades,
Horrid with gloom ; anon, the breath of May
Was blown around me, and the lulling play
Of dripping fountains. Yet the lights and shades,
The waving scarfs, the battle's grand parades
Seemed but vague shadows of that wondrous lay.

IV.

Love is that orbit of the restless soul
Whose circle grazes the confines of space,
Bounding within the limits of its race
Utmost extremes ; whose high and topmost pole
Within the very blaze of heaven doth roll ;
Whose nether course is through the darkest place
Eclipsed by hell. What daring hand shall trace
The blended joys and sorrows that control
A heart whose journeys the fixed hand of Fate
Points through this pathway? Who may soar so high,—
Behold such glories with unwinking eye?
Who drop so low beneath his mortal state,
And thence return with careful chart and date,
To mark which way another's course must lie?

V.

WHERE lags my mistress while the drowsy year
Wakes into spring? Lo! Winter sweeps away
His snowy skirts, and leaves the landscape gay
With early verdure; and there's merry cheer
Among the violets, where the sun lies clear
On the south hillsides; and at break of day
I heard the bluebird busy at my ear;
And swallows shape their nests of matted clay
Along the eaves, or dip their narrow wings
Into the mists of evening. All the earth
Stirs with the wonder of a coming birth,
And all the air with feathery music rings.
Spring, it would crown thee with transcendent worth,
To bring my love among thy beauteous things.

VI.

No gentle touches of your timid hand, —
No shuddering kisses pressed upon my lip,
'Twixt fear and passion, — no bold words that strip
The feigning garb off in which we two stand,
Acting our parts, at the harsh world's command, —
No deed that offers to our dust a sip
Of heavenly nectar, — no incautious slip,
To wring a tear, yet calmly bear the brand,
For the great love through which we were betrayed !
Love flies with us on sorely crippled wings :
Prudence, and interest, and the bitter stings
Of shrewd distrust, are doled me. I am made
A beggar on your bounty. Lend me aid :
My heart starves, lady, on these wretched things.

VII.

I HAVE been mounted on life's topmost wave,
Until my forehead kissed the dazzling cloud ;
I have been dashed beneath the murky shroud
That yawns between the watery crests. I rave,
Sometimes, like cursed Orestes ; sometimes lave
My limbs in dews of asphodel ; or, bowed
With torrid heat, I moan to Heaven aloud,
Or shrink with Winter in his icy cave.
Now peace broods over me ; now savage rage
Spurns me across the world. Nor am I free
From nightly visions, when the pictured page
Of sleep unfolds its varied leaves to me,
Changing as often as the mimic stage ;—
And all this, lady, through my love for thee !

VIII.

TO THE MEMORY OF M. A. R.

WITH the mild light some unambitious star
 Illumes her pathway through the heavenly blue, —
 So unobtrusive that the careless view
 Scarce notes her where her haughtier sisters are, —
So ran thy life. Perhaps, from those afar,
 Thy gentle radiance little wonder drew,
 And all their praise was for the brighter few.
 Yet mortal vision is a grievous bar
To perfect judgment. Were the distance riven,
 Our eyes might find that star so faintly shone
 Because it journeyed through a higher zone,
Had more majestic sway and duties given,
 Far loftier station on the heights of Heaven,
 Was next to God, and circled round his throne.

IX.

TO J. M. B.

I WONDER, darling, if there does not wear
Something from love, with love's so daily use,
If in the sweetness of his vigorous juice
Time's bitter finger dips not here and there?
What thing of earthly growth itself can bear
Above its nature, overrule abuse,
And, like the marvel of the widow's cruse,
Freshen its taint, and all its loss repair?
I can but wonder at the faithful heart
That makes thy face so joyous in my sight,
And fills each moment with a new delight.
I can but wonder at the shades that start
Across thy features as we stand to-night,
With lips thus clinging, in the act to part.

X.

No hope is mine, no comfort mine ; for I
Am as an exile, and no pilgrim's grace
Nerves my despair ; I never can retrace
The paths I trod, though myriads pass me by,
Journeying, light-hearted, to the happy place
Whence I am driven. Thou, Nature, on whose face
I look for aid, dost close thy weary eye
Against my grief. The moon wanes in the sky,
The flowers dry up and perish, the great sea
Through all its land-locked arteries ebbs ; the dew
Lies sickening on the blighted branch ; no new
Creation opens with the spring : to me
There is no crescent moon, no bud, no view
Of reflux tides, no fruit, — nor will there be.

XI.

ABSENCE from thee is something worse than death ;
For to the heart that slumbers in the shroud,
What are the mourners' tears and clamors loud,
The open grave, the dismal cypress wreath ?
The quiet body misses not its breath ;
The pain that shivers through the weeping crowd
Is idle homage to the visage proud
That changeth not for all Affliction saith.
But to be thus, from thee so far away,
Is as though I, in seeming death, might be
Conscious of all that passed about my clay ;
As though I saw my doleful obsequy,
Mourned my own loss, rebelled against decay,
And felt thy tear-drops trickling over me.

XII.

TO ENGLAND.

LEAR and Cordelia ! 't was an ancient tale
Before thy Shakespeare gave it deathless fame :
The times have changed, the moral is the same.
So, like an outcast, dowerless and pale,
Thy daughter went, and in a foreign gale
Spread her young banner, till its sway became
A wonder to the nations. Days of shame
Are close upon thee : prophets raise their wail.
When the rude Cossack with an outstretched hand
Points his long spear across the narrow sea, —
“ Lo ! there is England ! ” — when thy destiny
Storms on thy straw-crowned head, and thou dost stand
Weak, helpless, mad, a by-word in the land, —
God grant thy daughter a Cordelia be !

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

I.

I ASK not for those thoughts, that sudden leap
From being's sea, like the isle-seeming kraken,
With whose great rise the ocean all is shaken,
And a heart-tremble quivers through the deep ;
Give me that growth, which some perchance deem sleep,
Wherewith the steadfast coral-stems uprise,
Which, by the toil of gathering energies,
Their upward way into clear sunshine keep,
Until, by Heaven's sweetest influences,
Slowly and slowly spreads a speck of green
Into a pleasant island in the seas,
Where, 'mid tall palms, the cane-roofed home is seen,
And wearied men shall sit at sunset's hour,
Hearing the leaves, and loving God's dear power.

II.

TO M. W., ON HER BIRTHDAY.

MAIDEN ! when such a soul as thine is born,
The morning stars their ancient music make,
And, joyful, once again their song awake,
Long silent now with melancholy scorn ;
And thou, not mindless of so blest a morn,
By no least deed its harmony shalt break,
But shalt to that high chime thy footsteps take,
Through life's most darksome passes unforlorn :
Therefore from thy pure faith thou shalt not fall,
Therefore shalt thou be ever fair and free,
And in thine every motion musical
As summer-air, majestic as the sea,
A mystery to those who creep and crawl
Through Time, and part it from Eternity !

III.

BELOVED ! in the noisy city here
The thought of thee can make all turmoil cease ;
Around my spirit, folds thy spirit clear
Its still, soft arms, and circles it with peace :
There is no room for any doubt or fear
In souls so overfilled with love's increase ;
There is no memory of the by-gone year,
But growth in heart's and spirit's perfect ease.
How hath our love — half nebulous at first —
Rounded itself into a full-orbed sun !
How have our lives and wills (as haply erst
They were, ere this forgetfulness begun)
Through all their earthly distantness outburst,
And melted, like two rays of light, in one !

IV.

TO A. C. L.

THROUGH suffering and sorrow thou hast passed
To show us what a woman true may be :
They have not taken sympathy from thee,
Nor made thee any other than thou wast,
Save as some tree, which in a sudden blast
Sheddeth those blossoms that are weakly grown
Upon the air, but keepeth every one
Whose strength gives warrant of good fruit at last :
So thou hast shed some blooms of gayety,
But never one of steadfast cheerfulness ;
Nor hath thy knowledge of adversity
Robbed thee of any faith in happiness,
But rather cleared thine inner eyes to see
How many simple ways there are to bless !

RICHARD HENRY WILDE.

I.

TO LORD BYRON.

BYRON ! 't is thine alone, on eagles' pinions,
In solitary strength and grandeur soaring,
To dazzle and delight all eyes ; outpouring
The electric blaze on tyrants and their minions ;
Earth, sea, and air, and powers and dominions,
Nature, man, time, the universe exploring ;
And from the wreck of worlds, thrones, creeds, opinions,
Thought, beauty, eloquence, and wisdom storing :
O, how I love and envy thee thy glory,
To every age and clime alike belonging ;
Linked by all tongues with every nation's glory.
Thou TACITUS of song ! whose echoes, thronging
O'er the Atlantic, fill the mountains hoary
And forests with the name my verse is wronging.

II.

TO THE MOCKING-BIRD.

WINGED mimic of the woods ! thou motley fool !

Who shall thy gay buffoonery describe ?

Thine ever-ready notes of ridicule

Pursue thy fellows still with jest and gibe :

Wit, sophist, songster, YORICK of thy tribe,

Thou sportive satirist of Nature's school ;

To thee the palm of scoffing we ascribe,

Arch-mocker and mad Abbot of Misrule !

For such thou art by day, — but all night long

Thou pour'st a soft, sweet, pensive, solemn strain,

As if thou didst in this thy moonlight song

Like to the melancholy JACQUES complain,

Musing on falsehood, folly, vice, and wrong,

And sighing for thy motley coat again.

JOHN HOWARD BRYANT.

I.

THERE is a magic in the moon's mild ray, —
What time she softly climbs the evening sky,
And sitteth with the silent stars on high, —
That charms the pang of earth-born grief away.
I raise my eye to the blue depths above,
And worship Him whose power, pervading space,
Holds those bright orbs at peace in his embrace,
Yet comprehends earth's lowliest things in love.
Oft, when the silent moon was sailing high,
I've left my youthful sports to gaze, and now,
When time with graver lines has marked my brow,
Sweetly she shines upon my sobered eye.
O, may the light of truth, my steps to guide,
Shine on my eve of life, — shine soft, and long abide.

II.

'T is Autumn, and my steps have led me far
To a wild hill, that overlooks a land
Wide-spread and beautiful. A single star
Sparkles new-set in heaven. O'er its bright sand
The streamlet slides with mellow tones away.
The west is crimson with retiring day ;
And the north gleams with its own native light.
Below, in autumn green, the meadows lie,
And through green banks the river wanders by,
And the wide woods with autumn hues are bright, —
Bright, but of fading brightness ! — soon is past
That dreamlike glory of the painted wood :
And pitiless decay o'ertakes, as fast,
The pride of men, the beauteous, great, and good.

GEORGE HENRY CALVERT.

I.

ON THE FIFTY-FIFTH SONNET OF SHAKESPEARE.

THE soul leaps up to hear this mighty sound,
Of Shakespeare triumphing. With glistening eye,
Forward he sent his spirit, to espy
Time's gratitude, and catch the far rebound
Of fame from worlds unpeopled yet ; and, crowned
With brightening light through all futurity,
His image to behold up-reaching high,
'Mongst the world's benefactors most renowned.
Like to the ecstasy, by man unnamed,
The spheral music doth to gods impart,
Was the deep joy that thou hast here proclaimed
Thy song's eternal echo gave thy heart.
O, the world thanks thee that thou 'st let us see,
Thou knew'st how great thou wast, how prized to be !

II.

TO THE STATUE OF EVE, BY POWERS.

Who that has had of beauteous womanhood
Translucent visions, in his holiest dreams,
Or when the abstracted, waking mind so teems
With images of beauty that 't will brood,
In happiest silence, on the fertile mood
So deeply, till each outward thing but seems
Fantastic, while the flashing, inward gleams
Compound a loveliness that would be wooed
As a reality, — were such to come
Before thee, with a virgin joy, his soul,
Like a new spirit in Elysium,
Would gush with ecstasy, while from it roll
All memories of dreams or inward sight,
Paled by the fulgence of thy wondrous light.

NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS.

I.

STORM had been on the hills : the day had worn
As if a sleep upon the hours had crept ;
And the dark clouds that gathered at the morn
In dull, impenetrable masses slept,
And the wet leaves hung droopingly, and all
Was like the mournful aspect of a pall.

Suddenly, on the horizon's edge, a blue
And delicate line, as of a pencil, lay,
And, as it wider and intenser grew,
The darkness removed silently away ;
And, with the splendor of a god, broke through
The perfect glory of departing day :
So, when his stormy pilgrimage is o'er,
Will light upon the dying Christian pour.

II.

ACROSTIC SONNET.

ELEGANCE floats about thee like a dress,
Melting the airy motion of thy form
Into one swaying grace ; and loveliness,
Like a rich tint that makes a picture warm,
Is lurking in the chestnut of thy tress,
Enriching it, as moonlight after storm
Mingles dark shadows into gentleness.

A beauty that bewilders like a spell
Reigns in thy eye's clear hazel, and thy brow,
So pure in veined transparency, doth tell
How spiritually beautiful art thou, —

A temple where angelic love might dwell.
Life in thy presence were a thing to keep,
Like a gay dreamer clinging to his sleep.

WILLIAM HENRY CUYERL HOSMER.

I.

ON A CASCADE NEAR WYOMING.

A BROOK, the woody mountain's bounding child,
With a deep murmur in its silvery flow,
Falls, in its journey over rocks up-piled,
On the green carpet of the glen below.
Above the cascade aged hemlocks throw
Their mossy branches, flecked with drops of spray,
Like warders old, that watch around bestow,
Stationed on rocky battlements of gray.
In haunts like these, when baffled in the fight
That drenched a groaning land with crimson showers,
The sturdy champions of the true and right
Have gathered to repair their wasted powers,
And rousing hymns of God and freedom heard,
Sung by the tumbling wave and tameless bird!

II.

NIGHT.

O NIGHT ! I love thee as a weary child
Loves the maternal breast on which it leans !
Day hath its golden pomp, its bustling scenes ;
But richer gifts are thine : the turmoil wild
Of a proud heart thy low, sad voice hath stilled,
Until its throb is gentler than the swell
Of a light billow, and its chamber filled
With cloudless light, with calm unspeakable :
Thy hand a curtain lifteth, and I see
One who first taught my heart with love to thrill,
Though long ago her lip of song grew still :
A strange mysterious power belongs to thee,
To morning, noon, and twilight-time unknown ;
For the dead gather round thy starry throne !

EPES SARGENT.*

I.

THE DEPARTURE.

AGAIN thy winds are pealing in mine ear !
Again thy waves are flashing in my sight !
Thy memory-haunting tones again I hear,
As through the waves our vessel wings her flight !
On thy cerulean breast, now swelling high,
Again, thou broad Atlantic, am I cast !
Six years, with gathering speed, have glided by,
Since, an adventurous boy, I hailed thee last ;
The sea-birds o'er me wheel, as if to greet
An old companion ; on my naked brow
The sparkling foam-drops not unkindly beat ;
Flows through my hair the freshening breeze ; and now
The horizon's ring enclasps me ; and I stand
Gazing where fades from view, cloud-like, my father-
land !

* From "Shells and Sea-Weeds, or, Records of a Summer Voyage to Cuba," in his "Songs of the Sea, 1847."

II.

THE AWAKENING.

How changed the scene ! our parting gaze, last night,
Was on the three-hilled city's swelling dome, —
The dome, o'erlooking from its stately height
Full many a sacred spire and happy home.
Rose over all, clouding the azure air,
A canopy of smoke, swart Labor's sign ;
While, like a forest Winter has stripped bare,
Bristled the masts along the water's line.
But now, the unbroken ocean and the sky
Seem to enclose us in a crystal sphere ;
A new creation fills the straining eye ;
No bark save ours,—no human trace is here !
But in the brightening east, a crimson haze
Floats up before the sun, his incense fresh of praise !

III.

TROPICAL WEATHER.

Now we 're afloat upon the tropic sea !
Here Summer holdeth a perpetual reign :
How flash the waters in their bounding glee !
The sky's soft purple is without a stain !
Full in our wake the smooth, warm trade-winds, blowing,
To their unvarying goal still faithful run !
And as we steer, with sails before them flowing,
Nearer the zenith daily climbs the sun.
The startled flying-fish around us skim,
Glossed, like the humming-bird, with rainbow dyes ;
And, as they dip into the water's brim,
Swift in pursuit the preying dolphin hies.
All, all is fair ; and, gazing round, we feel
Over the yielding sense the torrid languor steal.

JAMES BAYARD TAYLOR.

I.

FROM THE NORTH.

ONCE more without you ! — sighing, dear, once more,
For all the sweet, accustomed ministries
Of wife and mother : not as when the seas
That parted us my tender message bore
From the gray olives of the Cretan shore
To those that hid the broken Phidian frieze
Of our Athenian home, — but far degrees,
Wide plains, great forests, part us now : my door
Looks on the rushing Neva, cold and clear :
The swelling domes in hovering splendor lie,
Like golden bubbles, eager to be gone,
But the chill crystal of the atmosphere
Withholds them ; and along the northern sky
The amber midnight smiles in dreams of dawn !

II.

CHRISTMAS SONNETS.

I.

TO G. H. B.

IF that my hand, like yours, dear George, were skilled
To win from Wordsworth's scanty plot of ground
A shining harvest, such as you have found,
Where strength and grace, fraternally fulfilled,
As in those sheaves whose rustling glories gild
The hills of August, folded are and bound :
So would I draw my loving tillage round
Its borders, let the gentlest rains be spilled,
The goldenest suns its happy growth compel,
And bind for you the ripe, redundant grain :
But ah ! you stand amid your songful sheaves
So rich, this weed-born flower you might disdain,
Save that of me its growth and color tell,
And of my love some perfume haunt its leaves.

III.

CHRISTMAS SONNETS.

2.

TO E. C. S.

WHEN days were long, and o'er that farm of mine,
Green Cedarcroft, the summer breezes blew,
And from the walnut-shadows I and you,
Dear Edmund, saw the red lawn-roses shine,
Or, following our idyllic Brandywine
Through meadows flecked with many a flowery hue,
To where with wild Arcadian pomp I drew
Your Bacchic march among the startled kine, —
You gave me, linked with old Mæonides,
Your loving sonnet, — record dear and true
Of days as dear ; and now, when suns are brief
And Christmas snows are on the naked trees,
I give you this, — a withered winter leaf,
Yet with your blossom from one root it grew !

IV.

CHRISTMAS SONNETS.

3.

TO R. H. S.

THE years go by, old friend ! Each, as it fleets,
Moves to a farther, fairer realm the time
When first we twain the pleasant land of rhyme,
Discovered, choosing side by side our seats
Below our separate gods : in midnight streets
And haunted attics flattered by the chime
Of silver words, and fed by faith sublime,
I Shelley's mantle wore, you that of Keats, —
Dear dreams, that marked the Muse's childhood then,
Nor now to be disowned ! The years go by :
The clear-eyed goddess flatters us no more,
And yet, I think, in soberer aims of men
And servitude of Song, that you and I
Are nearer, dearer, faithfuller than before.

V.

CHRISTMAS SONNETS.

4.

TO J. L. G.

IF I could touch with Petrarch's pen this strain
Of graver song, and shape to liquid flow
Of soft Italian syllables the glow
That warms my heart, my tribute were not vain ;
But how shall I such measured sweetness gain
As may your golden nature fitly show,
And with the heart-light shine, that fills you so,
It pales the graces of the cultured brain ?
Long have I known, Love better is than Fame,
And Love hath crowned you ; yet if any bay
Cling to my chaplet when the years have fled
And I am dust, may this which bears your name
Cling latest, that my love's result shall stay,
When that which mine ambition wrought is dead !

RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

I.

TO BAYARD TAYLOR,

ON HIS FORTIETH BIRTHDAY.*

“WHOM the gods love die young,” we have been told,
And wise of some the saying seems to be ;
Of others foolish ; as it is of thee,
Who proven hast, “ Whom the gods love live old.”
For have not forty seasons o’er thee rolled,
The worst propitious, — setting like the sea
Towards the haven of prosperity,
Now full in sight, so fair the wind doth hold ?
Hast thou not fame, the poet’s chief desire ;
A wife, whom thou dost love, who loves thee well ;
A child, in whom your differing natures blend ;
And friends, troops of them, who respect, — admire ?
(How deeply *one*, it suits not now to tell ;)
Such lives are long, and have a perfect end.

* New York, January 11, 1865.

II.

TO EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

(With a volume of Shakespeare's Sonnets.)

HAD we been living in the antique days,
With him whose young but cunning fingers penned
These sugared sonnets to his strange-sweet friend,
I dare be sworn we would have won the bays.
Why not? We could have twined in amorous phrase
Sonnets like these, where love and friendship blend,
(Or were they writ for some more private end?)
And this, we see, remembered is with praise.
Yes, there's a luck in most things, and in none
More than in being born at the right time,
It boots not what the labor to be done,
Or feats of arms, or arts, or building rhyme.
Not that the heavens the little can make great,
But many a man has lived an age too late!

III.

TO JAMES LORIMER GRAHAM, JR.

(With a volume of Shakespeare's Sonnets.)

WHAT can I give him, who so much hath given, —
That princely heart, so over kind to me,
Who, richly guerdoned both of earth and heaven,
Holds for his friends his heritage in fee?
No costly trinket of the golden ore,
Nor precious jewel of the distant Ind :
Ay me ! these are not hoarded in my store,
Who have no coffers but my grateful mind.
What gift then, — nothing ? Stay, this book of song
May show my poverty and thy desert,
Steeped as it is in love, and love's sweet wrong,
Red with the blood that ran through Shakespeare's heart.
Read it once more, and, fancy soaring free,
Think, if thou canst, that I am singing thee !

IV.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

ENGLAND, if Time from out the Book of Fame
Should blot the desperate valor of thy men,
In the Crimea, an Englishwoman's name,
As sweet as ever came from poet's pen,
Would still defy him, — Florence Nightingale !
Honor to that fair girl, whose pitying heart
Led her across the sea, to ease the smart
Of soldier-wounds, and soothe the soldier's wail.
Men can be great when great occasions call :
In little duties women find their spheres, —
The narrow cares that cluster round the hearth ;
But this dear woman wipes a nation's tears,
And wears the crown of womanhood for all :
Happy the land that gave such goodness birth !

V.

COLONEL FREDERICK TAYLOR.

(Gettysburg, July 3, 1863.)

MANY the ways that lead to death, but few
Grandly, and one alone is glory's gate, —
Standing wherever free men dare their fate,
Determined, as thou wert, to die — or do !
This thou hast passed, young soldier, storming through
The fiery darkness round it, — not too late
To know the invaders beaten from thy State, —
Ah, why too soon to rout them, and pursue ?
But some must fall as thou hast fallen ; some
Remain to fight, and fall another day ;
And some go down in peace to their long rest.
If 't were not now, it would be still to come ;
And whether now, or when thy hairs were gray,
Were fittest for thee — God alone knows best.

VI.

TO JERVIS MCENTEE, ARTIST.

JERVIS, my friend, I envy you the art
Which you profess, and which possesses you,
To mimic Nature ; unto her so true,
Your pictures are what she is to the heart,
The mystery of which it is a part,
That gladdens when we crush the vernal dew,
And saddens when leaves fall, and flowers are few ;
Nor quite forsakes us in the noisy mart
Whence she is banished, save in slips of sky
That swim in mist, or drip in dreary rain,
No glimpse of peaks far off, nor forests nigh,
Only dark streets, strange forms, a barren pain ;
Till to my wall I turn a longing eye,
When you restore me mountains, woods again !

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.*

I.

A MOTHER'S PICTURE.

SHE seemed an angel to our infant eyes !
Once, when the glorifying moon revealed
Her who at evening by our pillow kneeled —
Soft-voiced and golden-haired, from holy skies
Flown to her loves on wings of Paradise —
We looked to see the pinions half concealed.
The Tuscan vines and olives will not yield
Her back to me, who loved her in this wise,
And since have little known her, but have grown
To see another mother tenderly
Watch over sleeping darlings of my own :
Perchance the years have changed her ; yet alone
This picture lingers : still she seems to me
The fair, young angel of my infancy.

* Since the preliminary essay on American Sonnets and Sonnet-eers was written, my attention has been directed to a set of sonnets, few in number, but of exquisite beauty, by Edmund C. Stedman of New York. They are to be found in his two volumes of poetry, "Poems Lyrical and Idyllic," published by Mr. Charles Scribner of New York, and "Alice of Monmouth, with Other Poems," published by Mr. Carleton of the same city. There are but four

II.

HOPE DEFERRED.

BRING no more flowers and books and precious things !
O, speak no more of our beloved Art,
Of summer haunts, — melodious wanderings
In leafy refuge from this weary mart :
Surely such thoughts were dear unto my heart ;
Now every word a newer sadness brings !
Thus oft some forest-bird, caged far apart
From verdurous freedom, droops his careless wings,
Nor craves for more than food from day to day ;
So long bereft of wildwood joy and song,
Hopeless of all he dared to hope so long, —
The music born within him dies away :
Even the song he loved becomes a pain,
Full-freighted with a longing all in vain.

of these sonnets in all. Two of them are constructed according to the true Italian model. The other two end with rhyming couplets, and therefore have that epigrammatic termination which the Italian masters considered fatal to the beauty of the sonnet. Mr. Stedman is nevertheless a genuine sonneteer in spirit, if not always in form ; and a little further study of the peculiar structure of this species of poem will place him in the front rank of sonnet-writers. Indeed, I shall not attempt to decide whether the sonnets hereafter quoted have not already won him that position.

III.

THE SWALLOW.

HAD I, my love declared, the tireless wing
That wafts the swallow to her northern skies,
I would not, sheer within the rich surprise
Of full-blown Summer, like the swallow, fling
My coyer being ; but would follow Spring,
Melodious consort, as she daily flies,
Apace with suns that o'er new woodlands rise
Each morn — with rains her gentler stages bring.
My pinions should beat music with her own ;
Her smiles and odors should delight me ever,
Gliding, with measured progress, from the zone
Where golden seas receive the mighty river,
Unto yon lichened cliffs, whose ridges sever
Our Norseland from the Arctic surge's moan.

IV.

TO B. T.

(With a copy of the Iliad.)

BAYARD, awaken not this music strong,
While round thy home the indolent sweet breeze
Floats lightly as the summer breath of seas
O'er which Ulysses heard the Sirens' song !
Dreams of low-lying isles to June belong,
And Circe holds us in her haunts of ease ;
But later, when these high ancestral trees
Are sear, and such Odyssean languors wrong
The reddening strength of the autumnal year,
Yield to heroic words thine ear and eye :
Intent on these broad pages thou shalt hear
The trumpet's blare, the Argive battle-cry,
And see Achilles hurl his hurtling spear,
And mark the Trojan arrows make reply.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

I.

EUTERPE.

Now if Euterpe held me not in scorn,
I'd shape a lyric, perfect, fair, and round
As that thin band of gold wherewith I bound
Your slender finger our betrothal morn.
Not of Desire alone is music born,
Not till the Muse wills is our passion crowned :
Unsought she comes, if sought but seldom found.
Hence is it poets often are forlorn,
Taciturn, shy, self-immolated, pale,
Taking no healthy pleasure in their kind,
Wrapt in their dream as in a coat of mail.
Hence is it I, the least, a very hind,
Have stolen away into this leafy vale,
Drawn by the flutings of the silvery wind.

II.

PURSUIT AND POSSESSION.

WHEN I behold what pleasure is Pursuit,
What life, what glorious eagerness it is ;
Then mark how full Possession falls from this,
How fairer seems the blossom than the fruit, —
I am perplexed, and often stricken mute,
Wondering which attained the higher bliss,
The wingéd insect, or the chrysalis
It thrust aside with unreluctant foot.
Spirit of verse which still eludes my art,
You shapes of loveliness that still do haunt me,
O never, never rest upon my heart,
If when I have thee I shall little want thee !
Still flit away in moonlight, rain, and dew,
Wills o' the wisp, that I may still pursue !

III.

ACCOMPLICES.

(Virginia, 1865.)

THE soft new grass is creeping o'er the graves
By the Potomac ; and the crisp ground-flower
Lifts its blue cup to catch the passing shower ;
The pine-cone ripens, and the long moss waves
Its tangled gonfalons above our braves.

Hark, what a burst of music from yon bower ! —
The Southern nightingale that, hour by hour,
In its melodious summer madness raves.
Ah, with what delicate touches of her hand,
With what sweet voices, Nature seeks to screen
The awful Crime of this distracted land, —
Sets her birds singing, while she spreads her green
Mantle of velvet where the Murdered lie,
As if to hide the horror from God's eye.

IV.

EGYPT.

FANTASTIC Sleep is busy with my eyes :

I seem in some waste solitude to stand

Once ruled of Cheops : upon either hand

A dark, illimitable desert lies,

Sultry and still, — a realm of mysteries ;

A wide-browed Sphinx, half buried in the sand,

With orbless sockets stares across the land,

The wofulest thing beneath these brooding skies

Where all is woful, weird-lit vacancy.

'T is neither midnight, twilight, nor moonrise.

Lo ! while I gaze, beyond the vast sand-sea

The nebulous clouds are downward slowly drawn,

And one bleared star, faint-glimmering like a bee,

Is shut i' the rosy outstretched hand of Dawn.

PAUL H. HAYNE.

I.

ANCIENT FABLES.

YE pleasant myths of eld, why have ye fled ?
The earth has fallen from her blissful prime
Of summer years ; the dews of that sweet time
Are withered on its garlands sear and dead.
No longer in the blue fields overhead
We list the rustling of immortal wings,
Or hail at eve the kindly visitings
Of gentle Genii to fair fortunes wed :
The seas have lost their Nereids, the sad streams
Their gold-haired habitants, the mountains lone
Those happy Oreads ; and the blithesome tone
Of Pan's soft pipe melts only in our dreams :
Fitfully fall the old Faith's broken gleams
On our dull hearts cold as sepulchral stone.

II.

PENT in this common sphere of sensual shows,
I pine for beauty, — beauty of fresh mien,
And gentle utterance, and the charm serene,
Wherewith the hue of mystic dreamland glows ;
I pine for lulling music, the repose
Of low-voiced waters, in some realm between
The perfect Aidenn, and this clouded scene
Of love's sad loss, and passion's mournful throes ;
A pleasant country, girt with twilight calm,
In whose fair heaven a moon of shadowy round
Wades through a fading fall of sunset rain ;
Where drooping lotos flowers, distilling balm,
Dream by the drowsy streamlets Sleep hath crowned,
And Care forgets to sigh, and Patience conquers Pain.

III.

Now, while the Rear-Guard of the flying Year,
Rugged December, on the season's verge,
Marshals his pale Days to the mournful dirge
Of muffled winds in far-off forests drear,
Good friend ! turn with me to our in-door cheer ;
Draw nigh, the huge flames roar upon the hearth,
And this sly sparkler is of subtlest birth,
And a rich vintage poet souls hold dear ;
Mark how the sweet rogue woos us ! Sit thee down,
And we will quaff, and quaff, and drink our fill,
Topping the spirits with a Bacchanal crown,
Till the funereal blast shall wail no more,
But silver-throated clarions seem to thrill,
And shouts of triumph peal along the shore.

IV.

OCTOBER.

THE passionate summer's dead ! — the sky's aglow
With roseate flushes of matured desire,
The winds at eve are musical, and low
As sweeping chords of a lamenting lyre,
Far up among the pillared clouds of fire,
Whose pomp of strange procession upwards rolls
With gorgeous blazonry of pictured scrolls,
To celebrate the summer's past renown ;
Ah me ! How regally the heavens look down
O'ershadowing beautiful autumnal woods,
And harvest-fields with hoarded increase brown,
And deep-toned majesty of golden floods,
That lift their solemn dirges to the sky,
To swell the purple pomp that floateth by.

V.

POETS OF THE OLDEN TIME.

THE brave old poets sing of nobler themes
Than the weak griefs that haunt our coward souls ;
The torrent of their lusty music rolls,
Not through dark valleys of distempered dreams,
But murmurous pastures, lit by sunny streams ;
Or, rushing from some mountain-height of thought,
Swells to strange meaning that our minds have sought
Vainly to gather from the doubtful gleams
Of our more gross perceptions. O, their strains
Nerve and ennoble manhood ! — no shrill cry,
Set to a treble, tells of querulous woe ; —
Yet numbers deep-voiced as the mighty main's
Merge in the ring-dove's plaining, or the sigh
Of lovers whispering where sweet streamlets flow !

VI.

O GOD ! what glorious seasons bless thy world !
See ! the tranced Winds are nestling on the deep ;
The guardian Heavens unclouded vigil keep
O'er the mute Earth ; the beach-birds' wings are furled
Ghost-like and gray, where the dim billows, curled
Lazily up the sea-strand, sink in sleep,
Save when the random fish with lightning-leap
Flashes above them ; the far sky 's impearled,
Inland, with lines of silvery smoke that gleam
Upward from quiet homesteads, thin, and slow :
The sunset girds me like a gorgeous dream,
Pregnant with splendors, by whose marvellous spell
Senses and soul are flushed to one deep glow ;
A purple-vestured Mood more grand than words may tell.

VII.

O FAITHFUL heart ! on balmy nights like this,
I long to tell thee all the love I bear, —
My sacred love ! that knows not doubt, or fear,
Fixed in golden round of married bliss ;
The rapture of our first betrothal kiss
Thrills through me now, as warmly fond and dear
As when with eager soul I bent to hear
Thou didst not deem my tremulous vows amiss.
TIME cannot chill a love so true as ours,
But rather, like a spiritual SUN, matures
Affection's bloom, and brightens all its flowers ;
Thus, that which charmed in youth our manhood lures,
For passion wins from age its noblest powers,
And love 's evolved from love, whilst love endures.

VIII.

AN hour ago ! — and prostrate Nature lay
Like some sore-smitten creature nigh to death,
With feverish, parchéd lips, with laboring breath,
And languid eyeballs, darkening to the day ;
A burning NOONTIDE ruled with merciless sway
Earth, wave, and air ; the ghastly-stretching heath,
The sullen trees, the fainting flowers beneath,
Drooped hopeless, shrivelling in the torrid ray ; —
When, like a sudden, cheerful trumpet, blown
Far off by rescuing spirits, rose the wind
Urging great hosts of clouds ; the thunder's tone
Breaks into wrath ; the rainy cataracts fall ;
But, pausing soon, behold Creation shrined
In a new birth, — God's Covenant clasping all !

IX.

BETWEEN the sunken sun, and the new moon,
I stood in fields through which a clear brook ran
With scarce perceptible motion, not a span
Of its smooth surface trembling to the tune
Of sunset breezes ! “O delicious boon,”
I cried, “of quiet !— wise is Nature’s plan,
Who, in her realm as in the soul of man,
Alternates storm with calm, and the loud noon
With dewy evening’s soft and sacred lull :—
Happy the heart that keeps its twilight hour,
And, in the depths of heavenly peace reclined,
Loves to commune with thoughts of tender power,—
Thoughts that ascend, like angels beautiful,
A shining Jacob’s-ladder of the mind !”

X.

SPIRITS there are inwrought with vilest clay,
Which bear no God-like stamp of heavenly art,
Whose envious instincts writhe with bitter smart
Whene'er they feel some worthier nature's sway.
Ah! who so basely-born, so curst as they! —
Poor reptiles! — whose envenomed passions dart
Back to transfix their own corrupted heart,
And speed the progress of the soul's decay.
We pity such, yet loathe them. Who can keep
His honest scorn unspoken, should he see
These human vipers strive their fangs to steep
In the soul-blood of fame's Nobility?
Who but is glad when the swift lightnings leap
Of withering wrath, to blast them utterly?

THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.

I.

THE MASTER BARDS.

YE mighty masters of the song sublime,
Who, phantom-like, with large unwavering eyes,
Stalk down the solemn wilderness of Time,
Reading the mystery of the future skies ;
O, scorn not earth because it is not heaven ;
Nor shake the dust against us of your feet,
Because we have rejected what was given !
Still let your tongues the wondrous theme repeat !
Though ye be friendless in this solitude,
Quick-wingéd thoughts from many an unborn year,
God-sent, shall feed ye with prolific food,
Like those blest birds which fed the ancient seer ;
And Inspiration, like a wheeléd flame,
Shall bear ye upward to eternal fame !

II.

TO WORDSWORTH.

THY rise was as the morning, glorious, bright !
And Error vanished like the affrighted dark ;
While many a soul, as the aspiring lark,
Waked by thy dawn soared singing to the light,
Drowning in gladdest song the earth's despite !
And Beauty blossomed in all lowly nooks :
Love, like a river made of nameless brooks,
Grew and exulted in thy wakening sight :
All nature hailed thee as a risen sun ;
Nor will thy setting blur her thankful eyes !
While earth remains thy day shall not be done,
Nor cloud dispread to blot thy matchless skies ;—
When Death's command, like Joshua's, shall arise,
Thou 'lt stand as stood the Sun of Gibeon.

III.

INDIAN SUMMER.

IT is the season when the light of dreams
Around the year in golden glory lies ; —
The heavens are full of floating mysteries,
And down the lake the veiled splendor beams.
Like hidden poets lie the hazy streams,
Mantled with mysteries of their own romance,
While scarce a breath disturbs their drowsy trance.
The yellow leaf which down the soft air gleams,
Glides, wavers, falls, and skims the unruffled lake.
Here the frail maples and the faithful firs
By twisted vines are wed. The russet brake
Skirts the low pool ; and starred with open burrs
The chestnut stands. But when the north-wind stirs,
How like an armed host the summoned scene shall wake !

IV.

BEATRICE.

THOUGH others know thee by a fonder name,
I, in my heart, have christened thee anew ;
And though thy beauty in its native hue,
Shedding the radiance of whence it came,
May not bequeath to language its high claim,
Thy smiling presence, like an angel's wing,
Fans all my soul of poesy to flame,
Till even in remembering I must sing.
Such led the grand old Tuscan's longing eyes
Through all the crystal rounds of Paradise ;
And, in my spirit's farthest journeying,
Thy smile of courage leads me up the skies,
Through realms of song, of beauty, and of bliss ;
And therefore have I named thee Beatrice !

SONNETS TO WINTER.

I.

JOHN R. THOMPSON.

OLD WINE TO DRINK.*

YES ! fill the goblet high with generous wine,
As sparkling as the draughts of ancient Massic
Or old Falernian made by Horace classic,
Brought from the sunny valleys of the Rhine,
And throwing off their daughter's brilliant glances, —
Just as the diamond, long obscured from sight,
With all the rays it last absorbed is bright,
This wine, as o'er the festal board it dances,
Gives back the flashes from the beaming eye
Of the brown vineyard beauty, on our meeting :
Fill up ! to friends a kind, a cordial greeting,
And though December's winds may rustle by,
And lead the howlings of the furious storm,
Our faces kindle and our hearts are warm.

* It was a remark of one of the Spanish kings, that the four greatest blessings in life were, Old Wine to drink, Old Wood to burn, Old Books to read, and Old Friends to love.

II.

JOHN ESTEN COOKE.

OLD WOOD TO BURN.

OLD wood to burn ! — hew down the highest trunk
On Alleghanian ridges, seen afar —
A monarch crowned with his imperial star —
Against the crimson where the sun has sunk.
The sharp axe glittering in his kingly heart
Sends echo ringing through the golden woods, —
And then a crashing fall ! — like bursting floods
When roar the surges, and great mountains part !
The dim year wanes ; I see an in-door sight, —
Bright faces gathered round a blazing fire
At Yule or Pentecost when, rising higher,
The frolic-mirth draws gladness from the light
Of that old oak that towering once so vast
Laughed at the storm, and whistled at the blast !

III.

JOHN R. THOMPSON.

OLD BOOKS TO READ.

REACH from their dusty places of repose
A Virgil's lay or "Livy's pictured page,"
The varied lore of an Augustan age, —
What visions panoramic they disclose!
With o'er-attentive faculties we hear
The wandering minstrelsy of Scio's bard, —
Poor houseless tenant of a life ill-starred, —
Or catch the minster-music of the seer
Chanting of Paradise "and all our woe."
Then, with the Christian pilgrim for our guide,
We safely pass the dark and bridgeless tide
To Beulah's land, where flowerets ever blow,
Of Shakespeare's heroes trace the storied line,
Or weigh the mercies of the Book divine!

IV.

JOHN ESTEN COOKE.

OLD FRIENDS TO LOVE.

OLD friends to love! — true soul bound to true soul
With olden memories, and traces dear
Of the dead past, claiming the happy tear
That still at sight of each will fondly roll!
Old friends! No sycophants of yesterday,
With smiles and protestations never done,
Bright summer-flies, true “lovers of the sun”
And all who bask beneath the golden ray.
Old friends! who on the battle-field of life,
When closed the serried hosts in stormy fight,
Have raised the buckler Friendship strong and bright,
And borne us bleeding from the mortal strife,
Who heart-whole, pure in faith, once written *friend*,
In life and death are true, unto the end!

HENRY TIMROD.

I.

AT last, beloved Nature, I have met
Thee face to face upon thy breezy hills,
And boldly, where thy inmost bowers were set,
Gazed on thee naked in thy mountain rills :
When first I felt thy breath upon my brow,
Tears of strange ecstasy gushed out like rain,
And with a longing passionate as vain
I strove to clasp thee. But I know not how,
Always before me didst thou seem to glide,
And often from one sunny mountain-side
Upon the next bright peak I saw thee kneel,
And heard thy voice upon the billowy blast, —
But climbing, only reached that shrine to feel
The shadow of a PRESENCE which had passed.

II.

FATE! seek me out some lake far off and lone,
Shut in by wooded hills that steeply rise,
And beautiful with blue, inverted skies,
Where not a breeze but comes with softened tone,
And if the waves awake, they only moan
With a low, sullen music like the rills
That have their home among those happy hills;
And let me find — there left by hands unknown —
A bark with rifted sides, and threadbare sail,
Just strong enough to bear me from the shore,
But not to reach its tree-girt harbor more!
O happy, happy rest! O world of wail!
How calmly I would tempt the peaceful deep,
And sink with smiling brow into the dreamless sleep!

III.

ARE these wild thoughts thus fettered in my rhymes
Indeed the product of my heart and brain?
How strange that on my ear the rhythmic strain
Falls like faint memories of far-off times!
When did I feel the sorrow, act the part
Which I have striven to shadow forth in song?
In what dead century swept that mingled throng
Of mighty pains and pleasures through my heart?
Not in the yesterdays of that still life
Which I have passed so free and far from strife,
But somewhere in this weary world I know,
In some strange land, beneath some Orient clime,
I saw, or shared a martyrdom sublime,
And felt a deeper grief than any later woe.

IV.

MARY ! I dare not call thy charms divine,
But all the sweetest qualities of earth,
Which constitute an humbler, holier worth,
Grace, gayety, and gentleness are thine.
A grace more glorious than the grace of form,
And moulding less thy motions than thy mind ;
A gayety not thoughtless or unkind, —
Wild, and yet winning, womanly and warm ;
A gentleness of heart that is not weakness,
Persuasive, potent, beautiful in meekness :
Only at times, in some excited hour,
A flash that lights the darkness of thine eyes,
Reveals a secret and a deeper power, —
A spirit he has hardiness who tries.

V.

WHICH are the clouds, and which the mountains? See,
They mix and melt together! Yon blue hill
Looks fleeting as the vapors which distil
Their dews upon its summit, while the free
And far-off clouds, now solid, dark, and still,
An aspect wear of calm eternity.
Each seems the other, as our fancies will,
The cloud a mount, the mount a cloud, and we
Gaze doubtfully. So everywhere on earth —
This foothold, where we stand, with slipping feet —
The unsubstantial and substantial meet;
And we are fooled until made wise by Time.
Is not the obvious lesson something worth,
Lady? or have I woven an idle rhyme?

VI.

(Written on a small sheet of note-paper upon which a lady had requested the author to indite some verses.)

WERE I the Poet Laureate of the Fairies,
Who in a rose-leaf finds too broad a page,
Or could I, like your beautiful canaries,
Sing with free heart and happy, in a cage,
Perhaps I might within this little space
(As in some Eastern tale by magic power
A giant is imprisoned in a flower)
Have told you something with a poet's grace ;
But I need wider limits, ampler scope,
A world of freedom for a world of passion,
And even then the glory of my hope
Would not be uttered in its stateliest fashion ;
Yet, lady ! when fit language shall have told it,
You 'll find one little heart enough to hold it.

WILLIAM H. TIMROD.

AN AUTUMNAL DAY IN CAROLINA.

SLEEPS the soft South, nursing its delicate breath
To fan the first buds of the early spring ;
And Summer, sighing, mourns his faded wreath,
Its many-colored glories withering
Beneath the kisses of the new-waked North, —
Who yet in storms approaches not, but smiles
On the departing season, and breathes forth
A fragrance as of summer, — till at whiles
All that is sweetest in the varying year
Seems softly blent in one delicious hour ;
Waking dim visions of some former sphere
Where sorrows, such as earth owns, had no power
To veil the changeless lustre of the skies,
And mind and matter formed one Paradise.

II.

THE MAY QUEEN.

SARAH ! throbbed not thy young heart on that day
With innocent triumph, when the youthful throng,
With rites of ancient usage, and sweet song,
Had crowned thee Queen of verdant-mantled May?
And not unmeet thy triumph, — for the voice
Of thy young peers, which singled thee from all,
To circle with the rural coronal,
Spoke merit in the Queen of their free choice !
But still remember, Sarah, thou canst find
No lasting joy in earthly diadems,
Whether of flowers composed, or costly gems :
Those fade, and these oft dazzle but to blind ;
And we must look to other worlds than this
For crowns of real and abiding bliss.

JOHN G. SAXE.

I.

TO A CLAM.

Dum tacent clamant.

INGLORIOUS friend ! most confident I am
Thy life is one of very little ease ;
Albeit men mock thee with their similes,
And prate of being " happy as a clam " !
What though thy shell protects thy fragile head
From the sharp bailiffs of the briny sea ?
Thy valves are, sure, no safety-valves to thee,
While rakes are free to desecrate thy bed,
And bear thee off, — as foemen take their spoil, —
Far from thy friends and family to roam ;
Forced, like a Hessian, from thy native home,
To meet destruction in a foreign broil !
Though thou art tender, yet thy humble bard
Declares, O clam ! thy case is shocking hard !

II.

BEREAVEMENT.

NAY, weep not, dearest, though the child be dead ;
 He lives again in heaven's unclouded life,
With other angels that have early fled
 From these dark scenes of sorrow, sin, and strife ;
Nay, weep not, dearest, though thy yearning love
 Would fondly keep for earth its fairest flowers,
And e'en deny to brighter realms above
 The few that deck this dreary world of ours :
Though much it seems a wonder and a woe
 That one so loved should be so early lost,
And hallowed tears may unforbidden flow
 To mourn the blossom that we cherished most, —
Yet all is well : God's good design I see,
That where our treasure is, our hearts may be !

JOHN R. TAIT.

I.

TO A POET, WITH A COPY OF VERSES.

Do you remember how that once from Rome
I sent you a poor wild-flower ? tribute small
To your great kindness ! yet upon the wall
It grew, where bends the blue aerial dome
Above the Colosseum ; and the loam
That gave it life was sacred ; and o'er all
Reigned present the grand Past imperial !
And you disdained not the poor scentless bloom.
Thus may it be with these poor songs of mine, —
Less mine than Italy's, born of her skies,
Rocked to the rhythm of the swaying vine,
And nurtured where all night the rose replies
In perfumed whisperings, while all the vale
Rings with the joy of the enamored nightingale !

II.

WRITTEN AT VALLOMBROSA.

THE piny perfume of the mountain air ;
The brook's abandon on the rocky steep ;
The rustling leaves ; the tangled vines, where peep
(Like black eyes gleaming through an Oread's hair)
Large, luscious *more* 'mid the wild-flowers rare ;
The solemn forest aisles, where winds asleep
Whisper their dreamy *aves*, or in deep
Cathedral tones awake to choral prayer,
While like an echo sounds the pious choir
In the near cloisters ; — this — so grand, so lone,
So sad ! — is Vallombrosa. Gazing higher,
The purple peaks glow in the dying sun —
So beautiful ! my daring thoughts aspire,
And dwell with Milton on his cloudy throne !

III.

TO ———.

HAVE you forgotten the blest eve we sate,
 Awed by the tremulous murmur of the leaves,
 Rustling above us from low beechen eaves? —
You twining violets, with calm eyes, as Fate
Serenely weaves our woof predestinate.

 Dear flowers, the symbols of my future years!
 All my heart's impulses, its hopes and fears,
Heaved through my broken utterance. As the weight
Of fresh-fallen rain-drops bends some gentle flower,
 Thus drooped your fair cheek towards me with its
 tears,

 When (like a dream the memory appears)
I dared to kiss you. In a purple shower
 Neglected fell the violets. How bright
Seemed the red sunset, and the moon that night!

IV.

THE years, swift waves upon the sea of Time,
Melt into foam behind me ; a lone bark,
My soul leaps fearless in the future dark,
Love the sweet impulse, Fame the goal sublime.
The summer seas of Youth are passed, and now
The future of uncertain joy or wreck
Can fright not Hope, the emperor of the deck,
Who holds the helm, with Prudence at the prow.
And yet to-night with Memory I stand,
Like an unwilling passenger, and gaze
With heart-sick longings at my native land,
And count the billows of long-vanished days,
The fading path with spectral fires ablaze, —
The Past's dread history traced in God's own hand.

V.

POETS.

O, THERE are gentle souls on earth imbued
With love of man and nature's loveliness,
Who, like fair trees uprising 'mid a wood,
Grow toward heaven, the while they ever bless
With pleasing shade and liberal fruitfulness
The seeker at their feet. Warm gratitude
Be theirs, and theirs the soft caress
Of gentlest zephyrs ; be their solitude
Made populous with angels, all sublime
Their history, and when the woodmen come,
Transplanting them to that far sunnier clime
Where Eden's bays will rustle welcomes home,
Then may their lives, as some grand epic tome,
Close with a lofty hope, like an immortal rhyme.

JOHN JAMES PIATT.

LEARNING PRAYERS.

THE sweet pure mother, wearing through the dust
Her heaven-white garment of fresh Christian love
Silent about her, while her patient trust
O'er cloudland sings — one sunlit bird above —
Through twilight's hushing gold bends sweet and lowly
Down on her little children, making prayers
Grow in their hearts, while their low voices slowly
Send little angels heavenward unawares :
So Nature, a sweet mother, o'er us bends,
Through this dim eve of an eternal day ;
Whispers love-words, till gushing light ascends, —
Prayer's hidden fountain in the heart that lay ;
And heaven's mild dew into our dream descends,
While, flame-like, close tired eyes, waiting morn's
golden ray.

C. E. DA PONTE.

A LOVER'S SONNET.

HASTEN, soft wind, and when amid the gay
She moves with eyes of calm and tender light,
And forehead pale as foam-lit waves at night,
And voice harmonious as the warbling lay
Of birds that usher in the fragrant May,
Whisper, soft wind, that she remains the bright
Pure empress of this heart, whose sole delight
Is thus to muse on moments past away ;
O, whisper this and tell how little I
Have known of joy since last I saw her face,
How the bright stars, lamps of yon changing sky,
Woods, streams, and every secret place,
Bear witness to my truth ; yes, murmur this, then die
On those fair lips, bright opening buds of grace.

H.

TO ———.

I.

Now tripping forth, the fairy-footed Spring
Awakens bud and bloom, and, liberal, fills
The air with balm, mantling the sunny hills
With living green. The purple martins wing
Their wheeling course, and, twittering sharply, sing
In treble notes a strange and keen delight ;
And as they upward soar in airy flight,
Shrill through the sapphire arch their pæans ring.
O sweetheart mine ! shall I unfold the theme
Bird, bud, and blossom teach our swelling hearts ?
Thy tell-tale blush replies ! Nor idle deem
Nor slight the lesson Nature thus imparts,
While even Zephyr from his flight above,
Stooping to kiss thy cheek, sighs tenderly of Love !

TO ———.

2.

NAY, chide me not that I am jealous, love ;
For in my doting fondness I am grown
A very miser of the beauties thrown
Profusely round thee from the gods above :
I 'm even jealous of the pliant glove
Embracing oft thy slight and fairy hand,
And of sly Zephyr, with his whisper bland,
Who steals a-wooing from the budding grove,
And dallies o'er thy cheek with soft caress,
And of the ray that trembles as it glows
Upon thy fresh lips' loveliness ;—
For that dear hand I would with mine enclose,
And lip and cheek I would were mine alone,
And mine the only heart that thou wouldst wish to own.

TO ———.

3.

COME, dear one, smile consent ! Thy fair young brow
Was never arched for stern Denial's frown.
Could angels glance like April sunbeams down
From their high thrones, where burning splendors glow,
To this cold sphere, cloud-mantled, far below,
As April suns awake the budding flower,
And from its sweet cup quaff the dropping shower,
Warmed by their breath would young Love's roses glow,
From Feeling's flushing cheek they 'd kiss the tear,
And words of comfort to the worn heart tell ;
And art not thou, my life, their sister dear ?
Then in thy soul let kindred kindness dwell, —
Unfold the wings stretched o'er thy bosom fair
And let my wearied spirit nestle there !

TO ———.

4.

COME, dearest, to my heart. My soul and thine
A strange, ethereal, soft attraction feel :
Where'er I rove, my thoughts to thee incline ;
Whate'er my purpose, still to thee I steal ;
If in the temple to my God I kneel,
My prayers for pardon blend with prayers for thee ;
If on my senses slumber sets her seal,
My dreaming spirit seeks thee, wild and free ;
If in each other's presence blessed we stand,
Nearer and nearer still with smiles we move,
Soul melts with soul, as hand is joined in hand,
And throb and thrill attest the loadstar, love, —
Bright, burning mystery ! unknown to art,
But ever gently thus attracting heart to heart.

JEDIDIAH VINCENT HUNTINGTON.

ON READING BRYANT'S POEM OF "THE WINDS."

YE winds ! whose various voices in his lay
That bard interpreted, — your utterance mild,
Nor less your ministration, fierce and wild,
Of those resistless laws which ye obey
In your apparent lawlessness, — O, say,
Is not your will-less agency reviled
When it is likened unto what is styled
By such unwise, The Spirit of the Day ?
Not all the islands by tornadoes swept,
E'er knew such ruin as befalls a state,
When not the winds of God, but mortal breath,
With threatening sweetness of melodious hate,
Assaults the fabrics reverent ages kept
To shelter ancient loyalty and faith.

GEORGE LUNT.

I.

O FRIEND ! whose genial spirit, by the gift
Of a most bounteous nature, flings a shower
Of magic light along life's shadowed hour ;
As when day's sovereign lord, behind the rift
Of summer's brooding cloud, but looks, to lift
Incumbent heaviness from earth and sky,
With the bright beam of his exulting eye ;
Think not the spirit's course, whose silent drift
Flows on more calmly than the sparkling stream,
Is sad though thoughtful, or must therefore seem
From secret care, to need some healing shrift ;
Thine be, forever fresh and never coy,
The soul's bright mood ; — yet not less cheerful deem
The steadfast lustre of a sober joy !

II.

A STATESMAN.

STANCH at thy post, to meet life's common doom,
It scarce seems death, to die as thou hast died ;
Thy duty done, thy truth, strength, courage, tried,
And all things ripe for the fulfilling tomb !
A crown would mock thy hearse's sable gloom,
Whose virtues raised thee higher than a throne,
Whose faults were erring nature's, not his own, —
Such be thy sentence, writ with fame's bright plume,
Amongst the good and great ; for thou wast great,
In thought, word, deed, — like mightiest ones of old, —
Full of the honest truth which makes men bold,
Wise, pure, firm, just ; — the noblest Roman's state
Became not more a ruler of the free,
Than thy plain life, high thoughts, and matchless con-
stancy !

HENRY LYNDEN FLASH.

ADELE.

'T WOULD seem the Fairies, to excite surprise
Among us mortals, had endowed Adele
With baby-sprites that frolicked in her eyes,
As erst they did upon some lily-bell :
So gay and arch the lovely maiden seems,
My heart recalls the creature of its dreams
In days that now are past, — the long-ago,
When in my sleep I saw her, graceful, play
Among the violets and roses gay,
In flowery vales where now the thistles grow.
The beauty of my dreams has come again,
And Joy is ringing out pale Sorrow's knell, —
The chimes are echoed in this simple strain ;
Wilt thou accept it, beautiful Adele ?

ALBERT LAIGHTON.

NIGHT and its dews come silently to earth,
Like kindred mourners to the grave of Day ;
The stars look on with pale and throbbing ray,
As if through tears to watch them on their way :
O holy NIGHT ! what thoughts awake to birth,
That slumber in the day, amid its din
And restless strife for gain, — its glare and sin !
But NIGHT ! care-soothing NIGHT ! — O, I would win
Thy crown of peace, and wear it on my brow ;
Here, at thy starry throne I bend my knee,
All weak and humbled. I look up to thee,
And bless thee for the joy thou giv'st me now, —
A joy so hushed and deep, I tremble, lest
Dream-like, it fade away within my breast !

BENJAMIN PENHALLOW SHILLABER.

I.

ON A PICTURE OF LILLIE.

A TRUTHFUL page is childhood's lovely face,
Whereon sweet Innocence has record made, —
An outward semblance of the young heart's grace,
Where truth, and love, and trust are all portrayed.
O blessed childhood ! Like the wakening day,
The auroral flash bespeaks thy rising sun,
And spreads a roseate tint about thy way,
And Hope's gay blossoms open one by one.
Sweet Lillie ! As I gaze upon thy brow,
I feel my heart expanding into prayer,
That happiness may e'er maintain as now
The truthful seeming it exhibits there ;
May after life no bitterness impart,
But lie, as now, like sunshine round thy heart !

II.

DOMESTIC.

IT smiles ! Around its dimpling mouth see play
The first glad token of a dawning love,
Like the bright glow of newly-wakening day,
Or some new glory breaking from above.
It smiles ! O rapture ! and the mother's heart
Beats with quick pleasure its bright gleam to see,
Springing from dawning consciousness, whose part
In after years her crowning joy may be.
There's not a bright creation under heaven,
There's not a pure in heaven or in earth,
There's not an ecstasy to mortals given,
There's not a thing of most exalted worth,
Can, in a mother's plenitude of joy,
Excel that first smile of her darling boy !

III.

CHURCH MUSIC.

O, DEARLY do I love the organ's pealing,
With psalm-tune holy or with anthem grand,
The while I drum the measure with my hand,
And gaze devoutly at the frescoed ceiling
Where modern Angelos have spent their skill,
And mimic niche and pillar make display,
And shadows fling themselves in every way,
In independence of the sun's high will.
I love to hear the voice and organ blending,
And pouring on the air a cloud of sound,
Until, as with a spell, my soul is bound,
And every faculty is heavenward tending.
Bang goes a cricket! Squalls a child, sonorous;
And earth's harsh discord drowns the heavenly chorus!

IV.

THE SNOW.

Now white and beautiful creation lies,
Nursing its struggling germs beneath the veil ;
On rushing wings the fairy snow-flake flies,
Urged by the breath of the on-hurrying gale.
Now jingling bells thrill wildly on the ear,
As vying coursers dart along the way,
Now rise in chorus tones of blithest cheer,
As beams the moon with calm, untroubled ray.
I bless the snow ! How fair its glittering sheen,
How pure and holy is its pearly light !
Clad in its robe, the earth looks like a queen
In the chaste vesture of her bridal night.
'T is passing fair, — yet hardly fair is that, —
An avalanche, confound it, crushes in my hat !

V.

MOONSHINE.

ROLL on, bright Moon ! And if we bid or not,
It would, undoubtedly, as ever shine.
How sweetly on yon bank its beams recline,
A radiant glory hallowing the spot,
Revealing rock and shrub in mystic show,
The tall trees rising steeple-like and high,
Their forms disclosed against the western sky,
And flowers, moon-tinted there amid the glow ;
Revealing lovers, vowing by that moon
Eternal fealty, everlasting truth,
And hosts of pretty oaths impelled by youth,
Rapidly made, and broken full as soon !
Revealing, too, 'mid country autumn airs,
Young men and roguish maidens " hooking " pears.

VI.

A SUMMER NIGHT.

'NEATH the mild beauty of a summer night,
I leave my chamber to enjoy the air, —
To feel its eddies circling in my hair,
And feel it kiss my brow in wild delight.
The starry gems bestud the concave high ;
O blessed Stars ! on you I fix my eye,
And long for your bright spheres to take my flight.
Beneath o'erlacing elms, shut out from sight,
I stray, my head reclined upon my breast, —
My thoughts away, away amid the blest, —
The world forgot, in my abstractions, quite.
Hark ! there 's a sound of earth, a note of bliss, —
A most ecstatic smack, I wis, —
Borne to my ear from darkness, comes a lover's kiss !

CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN.

TO AN AUTUMN ROSE.

TELL her I love her, — love her for those eyes,
Now soft with feeling, radiant now with mirth,
Which, like a lake reflecting autumn skies,
Reveal two heavens here to us on earth, —
The one in which their soulful beauty lies,
And that wherein such soulfulness has birth.
Go to my lady, ere the season flies,
And the rude winter comes thy bloom to blast, —
Go ! and with all of eloquence thou hast,
The burning story of my love discover ;
And if the theme should fail, alas ! to move her,
Tell her when youth's gay budding time is past,
And summer's gaudy flowering is over,
Like thee, my love will blossom to the last !

ANONYMOUS.

I.

O'ER the far waters floats the boatman's song,
Timed by the faint fall of the distant oar ;
The fitful surges roll their waves along,
With hoarse and wrathful murmurings to the shore ;
Through the rent woof of fleecy clouds afar
Steals on my soul like evening's holy close,
The lovely lustrous light of a lone star,
Heralding the Night-Queen to her sweet repose :
Yet all this fairy scene hath left no power,
No balm to bring my burdened heart relief,
Sitting alone in midnight's witching hour,
Bowed by the spell of an o'ermastering grief,
While half the world lies wrapped in slumber deep,
Calm as the moon's pale beams that on these waters sleep.

II.

TO POESY.

Wonderful Spirit! — whose eternal shrine
Is in great poets' souls, whose voice doth send
High truths and dreams prophetic without end
Into the blind world from those founts divine, —
Deep adoration from such souls is thine ;
But I have loved thee, spirit, as a friend,
Wooed thee, in pensive leisure, but to lend
Thy sweetness to this wayward heart of mine,
And charm my lone thoughts into joyousness.
And I have found that thou canst lay aside
Thy terrors and thy glory and thy pride ;
Quit thy proud temples for a calm recess
In lowly hearts, and dream sweet hours away,
Winning from sterner thoughts a frequent holiday.

III.

TO MY WIFE.

As some lone wanderer, in a darksome vale
Where towering mountains all in gloom enclose,
Stands through the night, and sees the chill stars pale,
In outer darkness, all their mellow glows ;
At once beholds a flood of light that flows
Through some high portal in the mountain's side,
Bathing in brightness all the valley wide,
And through that gate celestial, far unfold
The vista, radiant in molten gold,
The trees and flowers, gay-decked in pearly dew,
And crystal streams through grassy meadows rolled,
And Nature, glorious in her myriad hues :
So, in life's vale, I lift mine eyes to thee,
Whose love brought light when all was gloom to me !

IV.

SABBATH MORNING.

HARK, from afar, the sound of Sabbath bells !
In solemn music pealing through the air !
Again the day of rest these notes declare ;
And as their harmony uprising swells,
A voice from universal Nature tells
How sweetly in the anthem she doth share.
Soft breezes whisper to the heavens fair ;
A peaceful murmur by the seaside dwells.
The melody of birds, the hum of bees,
The dew-drop falling from the buds of spring,
Each rustling leaf upon the forest trees,
Join in the strain. Now myriad angels sing :
“ Prepare, ye mortals, all your jubilees,
And swell hosannahs to the Eternal King.”

V.

TO A CLOUD.

THOU gorgeous cloud, in gold and purple furled,
In thy career I read a mystery ;
For, like the gilded hopes of this strange world,
Thou art delusion ; yet I gaze on thee,
As if thou wert what thou dost seem to be,
Rolling along the heavens, — a golden car.
'T were fine, amid the stars a wanderer free,
To lie within thy folds, and look afar
Over the teeming land and sparkling sea !
How pleasant from thy bosom to descry
You monarch mountain that doth tower so high,
A speck, — diminished to the distant eye, —
And cataracts, that pall the ear and sight,
Twinkling like tiny dew-drops in the light !

FEMALE SONNETEERS
OF AMERICA.





FEMALE SONNETEERS.

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.

I.

EXPRESSIONLESS.

THE thoughts which in this aching bosom dwell,
And weigh it with a sad, desponding weight, —
Like ship unbuoyant with her heavy freight,
Whose ploughing hull retards the pressing swell
Of homeward-urging sail, — within their cell,
Nameless and wordless, struggle with their fate
And yield but one deep plain, — too late ! too late !
Then falter into silence. It is well !
Ah, could our lips embody all the grace
And garnered beauty of the inmost soul,
Earth were no more a blank, impeding place,
But, loosed from bonds perpetual, hymns would roll.
Thou God ! most good, in each our lips to bind ; —
For what were earth, did all our woe expression find !

II.

REGRETS.

MESEEMED as I did walk a crystal wall
Translucent in the hue of rosy morn,
And saw Eurydice, from Orpheus torn,
Lift her white brow from out its heavy pall,
With sweet lips echoing his melodious call,
And following him, love-led and music-borne, —
A sharp and broken cry, and she was gone !
Thou fairest grief, thou saddest type of all
Our sorrowing kind ! O lost Eurydice !
Thy deathful cry thrilled in mine every vein,
When Orpheus turned him back, thus losing thee.
His broken lute and melancholy plain
All time prolongs, — the still unceasing flow
Of unavailing grief, and a regretful woe.

III.

POESY.

WITH no fond, sickly thirst for fame I kneel,
O goddess of the high-born art, to thee ;
Not unto thee with semblance of a zeal
I come, O pure and heaven-eyed Poesy !
Thou art to me a spirit and a love,
Felt ever from the time when first the earth
In its green beauty, and the sky above,
Informed my soul with joy too deep for mirth.
I was a child of thine before my tongue
Could lisp its infant utterance unto thee ;
And now, albeit from my harp are flung
Discordant numbers, and the song may be
That which I would not, yet I know that thou
The offering wilt not spurn, while thus to thee I bow.

IV.

AN INCIDENT.

A SIMPLE thing, yet chancing as it did,
When life was bright with its illusive dreams,
A pledge and promise seemed beneath it hid.
The ocean lay before me, tinged with beams
That lingering draped the west, a wavering stir ;
And at my feet down fell a worn, gray quill :
An eagle, high above the darkling fir,
With steady flight, seemed there to take his fill
Of that pure ether breathed by him alone.
O noble bird ! why didst thou loose for me
Thy eagle plume ? still unessayed, unknown,
Must be that pathway fearless winged by thee :
I ask it not, no lofty flight be mine ;
I would not soar like thee, in loneliness to pine !

V.

THE UNATTAINED.

AND is this life? and are we born for this? —

To follow phantoms that elude the grasp,

Or whatsoe'er secured, within our clasp

To withering lie, as if each earthly kiss

Were doomed death's shuddering touch alone to meet.

O Life! hast thou reserved no cup of bliss?

Must still THE UNATTAINED beguile our feet?

THE UNATTAINED with yearnings fill the breast,

That rob for aye the spirit of its rest?

Yes, this is Life; and everywhere we meet,

Not victor crowns, but wailings of defeat;

Yet faint thou not: thou dost apply a test,

That shall incite thee onward, upward still:

The present cannot sate, nor e'er thy spirit fill.

VI.

THE WIFE.

ALL day, like some sweet bird, content to sing
In its small cage, she moveth to and fro ;
And ever and anon will upward spring
To her sweet lips, fresh from the fount below,
The murmured melody of pleasant thought,
Unconscious uttered, gentle-toned and low.
Light household duties, evermore inwrought
With placid fancies of one trusting heart
That lives but in her smile, and turns
From life's cold seeming and the busy mart,
With tenderness, that heavenward ever yearns
To be refreshed where one pure altar burns.
Shut out from hence, the mockery of life,
Thus liveth she content, the meek, fond, trusting wife !

VII.

THE DREAM.

I DREAMED last night, that I myself did lay
Within the grave, and after stood and wept.
My spirit sorrowed where its ashes slept !
'T was a strange dream, and yet methinks it may
Prefigure that which is akin to truth.
How sorrow we o'er perished dreams of youth,
High hopes and aspirations doomed to be
Crushed and o'er mastered by earth's destiny !
Fame, that the spirit loathing turns to ruth, —
And that deluding faith, so loath to part,
That earth will shrine for us one kindred heart !
O, 't is the ashes of such things that wring
Tears from the eyes ; hopes like to these depart,
And we bow down in dread, o'ershadowed by Death's
wing.

VIII.

WAYFARERS.

EARTH careth for her own : the fox lies down
In her warm bosom, and it asks no more.
The bird, content, broods in its lowly nest,
Or, its fine essence stirred, with wing outflown,
Circles in airy rounds to heaven's own door,
And folds again its plume upon her breast.
Ye, too, for whom her palaces arise,
Whose Tyrian vestments sweep the kindred ground,
Whose golden chalice Ivy-Bacchus dyes,
She, kindly mother, liveth in your eyes,
And no strange anguish may your lives astound.
But ye, O pale, lone watchers for the true,
She knoweth not. In her ye have not found
Place for your stricken head, wet with the midnight
dew.

IX.

TO THE HUDSON.

O RIVER ! gently as a wayward child

I saw thee 'mid the moonlight hills at rest, —
Capricious thing with thine own beauty wild.

How didst thou still the throbbings of thy breast !
Rude headlands were about thee stooping round,

As if amid the hills to hold thy stay ;
But thou didst hear the far-off ocean sound,

Inviting thee from hill and vale away,
To mingle thy deep waters with its own ;
And, at that voice, thy steps did onward glide,
Onward from echoing hill and valley lone.

Like thine, O, be my course, — nor turned aside,
While listing to the soundings of a land,
That, like the ocean-call, invites me to its strand.

FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE.

I.

TO SHAKESPEARE.

OFt, when my lips I open to rehearse
Thy wondrous spells of wisdom, and of power,
And that my voice, and thy immortal verse,
On listening ears and hearts, I mingled pour,
I shrink dismayed, and awful doth appear
The vain presumption of my own weak deed ;
Thy glorious spirit seems to mine so near,
That suddenly I tremble as I read.
Thee an invisible auditor I fear.
O, if it might be so, my master dear !
With what beseeching would I pray to thee,
To make me equal to my noble task !
Succor from thee how humbly would I ask,
Thy worthiest works to utter worthily !

II.

WHAT is my lady like ? thou fain wouldst know.

A rosy chaplet of fresh apple-bloom,
Bound with blue ribbon, lying on the snow.

What is my lady like ? The violet gloom
Of evening, with deep orange light below.

She 's like the noonday smell of a pine wood ;
She 's like the sounding of a stormy flood ;
She 's like a mountain-top high in the skies,
To which the day its earliest light doth lend ;
She 's like a pleasant path without an end ;
Like a strange secret, and a sweet surprise ;
Like a sharp axe of doom, wreathed with blush-roses.
A casket full of gems whose key one loses ;
Like a hard saying, wonderful and wise.

III.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

How passing sad ! Listen, it sings again !
Art thou a spirit, that amongst the boughs
The livelong night dost chant that wondrous strain,
Making wan Dian stoop her silver brows
Out of the clouds to hear thee ? Who shall say,
Thou lone one, that thy melody is gay ?
Let him come listen now to that one note
That thou art pouring o'er and o'er again
Through the sweet echoes of thy mellow throat,
With such a sobbing sound of deep, deep pain.
I prithee cease thy song ! for from my heart
Thou hast made memory's bitter waters start,
And filled my weary eyes with the soul's rain.

IV.

TO SHAKESPEARE.

IF from the height of that celestial sphere
Where now thou dwell'st, spirit powerful and sweet !
Thou yet canst love the race that sojourn here,
How must thou joy, with pleasure not unmeet
For thy exalted state, to know how dear
Thy memory is held throughout the earth,
Beyond the favored land that gave thee birth.
E'en in thy seat in heaven, thou mayst receive
Thanks, praise, and love, and wonder ever new,
From human hearts, who in thy verse perceive
All that humanity calls good and true ;
Nor dost thou for each mortal blemish grieve.
They from thy glorious works have fallen away,
As from thy soul its outward form of clay.

V.

By jasper founts, whose falling waters make
Eternal music to the silent hours ;
Or 'neath the gloom of solemn cypress bowers,
Through whose dark screen no prying sunbeams break :
How oft I dream I see thee wandering,
With thy majestic mien, and thoughtful eyes,
And lips, whereon all holy counsel lies,
And shining tresses of soft rippling gold,
Like to some shape, beheld in days of old
By seer or prophet, when, as poets sing,
The gods had not forsaken yet the earth,
But loved to haunt each shady dell and grove ;
When every breeze was the soft breath of love ;
When the blue air rang with sweet sounds of mirth,
And this dark world seemed fair as at its birth.

VI.

SPIRIT of all sweet sounds ! who in mid-air
Sittest enthroned, vouchsafe to hear my prayer !
Let all those instruments of music sweet
That in great Nature's hymn bear burden meet
Sing round this mossy pillow, where my head
From the bright noontide sky is shelteréd.
Thou southern wind ! wave, wave thy od'rous wings ;
O'er your smooth channels gush, ye crystal springs !
Ye laughing elves ! that through the rustling corn
Run chattering ; thou tawny-coated bee,
Who at thy honey-work sing'st drowsily ;
And ye, O ye ! who greet the dewy morn,
And fragrant eventide, with melody,
Ye wild wood-minstrels, sing my lullaby !

VII.

WHENE'ER I recollect the happy time
When you and I held converse dear together,
There come a thousand thoughts of sunny weather,
Of early blossoms, and the fresh year's prime ;
Your memory lives forever in my mind
With all the fragrant beauties of the spring,
With od'rous lime and silver hawthorn twined,
And many a noonday woodland wandering.
There 's not a thought of you, but brings along
Some sunny dream of river, field, and sky ;
'T is wafted on the blackbird's sunset song,
Or some wild snatch of ancient melody.
And, as I date it still, our love arose
'Twixt the last violet and the earliest rose.

VIII.

LIKE one who walketh in a plenteous land,
By flowing waters, under shady trees,
Through sunny meadows, where the summer bees
Feed in the thyme and clover ; on each hand
Fair gardens lying, where of fruit and flower
The bounteous season hath poured out its dower ;
Where saffron skies roof in the earth with light,
And birds sing thankfully towards heaven, while he
With a sad heart walks through this jubilee,
Beholding how, beyond this happy land,
Stretches a thirsty desert of gray sand,
Where all the air is one thick, leaden blight,
Where all things dwarf and dwindle, — so walk I,
Through my rich, present life, to what beyond doth lie.

ANNE CHARLOTTE LYNCH.

I.

ON SEEING THE IVORY STATUE OF CHRIST.

THE enthusiast brooding in his cell apart
O'er the sad image of the Crucified,
The drooping head, closed lips, and piercé side,
A holy vision fills his raptured heart ;
With heavenly power inspired, his unskilled arm
Shapes the rude block to this transcendent form.
O Son of God ! thus, ever thus, would I
Dwell on the loveliness enshrined in thee, —
The lofty faith, the sweet humility,
The boundless love, the love that could not die.
And as the sculptor, with thy glory warm,
Gives to this chiselled ivory thy fair form,
So would my spirit in thy thought divine
Grow to a semblance, fair as this, of thine.

II.

THE honey-bee, that wanders all day long
The field, the woodland, and the garden o'er,
To gather in his fragrant winter store,
Humming in calm content his quiet song,
Seeks not alone the rose's glowing breast,
The lily's dainty cup, the violet's lips,
But from all rank and noxious weeds he sips
The single drop of sweetness closely prest
Within the poison chalice. Thus if we
Seek only to draw forth the hidden sweet
In all the varied human flowers we meet
In the wide garden of humanity,
And, like the bee, if home the spoil we bear,
Hived in our hearts it turns to nectar there.

III.

NIGHT closes round me, and wild threatening forms
 Clasp me with icy arms and chain me down,
 And bind upon my brow a cypress crown,
Dewy with tears ; and heaven frowns dark with storms.
But the one glorious memory of thee
 Rises upon my path to guide and bless, —
 The bright Shekinah of the wilderness,
The polar star upon a trackless sea,
The beaming Pharos of the unreachèd shore ;
 It spans the clouds that gather o'er my way, —
 The rainbow of my life's tempestuous day.
O blessed thought ! stay with me evermore,
 And shed thy lustrous beams where midnight glooms,
 As fragrant lamps burned in the ancient tombs.

IV.

As some dark stream within a cavern's breast
Flows murmuring, moaning for the distant sun, —
So, ere I met thee, murmuring its unrest,
Did my life's current coldly, darkly run.
And as that stream beneath the sun's full gaze
Its separate course and life no more maintains,
But now absorbed, transfused, far o'er the plains
It floats, etherealized in those warm rays, —
So, in the sunlight of thy fervid love,
My heart, so long to earth's dark channels given,
Now soars, all doubt, all pain, all ill above,
And breathes the ether of the upper heaven ;
So thy high spirit holds and governs mine,
So is my life, my being, lost in thine.

V.

THE mountain lake, o'ershadowed by the hills,
May still gaze heavenward on the evening star,
Whose distant light its dark recesses fills,
Though boundless distance must divide them far.
Still may the lake the star's bright image wear ;
Still may the star, from its blue ether dome,
Shower down its silver beams across the gloom,
And light the wave that wanders darkly there.
O my life's star ! thus do I turn to thee,
Amid the shadows that above me roll,
Thus from thy distant sphere thou shin'st on me,
Thus does thine image float upon my soul,
Through the wide space that must our lives dis sever
Far as the lake and star, ah me ! forever !

MRS. SARAH JOSEPHA HALE.

THE EMPIRE OF WOMAN.—A SERIES OF SONNETS.

I.

WOMAN'S EMPIRE DEFINED.

THE outward world, for rugged toil designed,
Where Evil from true Good the crown hath riven,
Hath been to men's dominion ever given ;
But woman's empire, holier, more refined,
Moulds, moves, and sways the fallen yet God-breathed
mind,
Lifting the earth-crushed heart to hope and heaven.
As plants put forth to summer's gentle wind,
And 'neath the sweet, soft light of starry even,
Those treasures which the tyrant winter's sway
Could never wrest from nature, — so the soul
Will woman's sweet and tender power obey ;
Thus doth her summer smile its strength control ;
Her love sow flowers along life's thorny way ;
Her star-bright faith lead up towards heaven's goal.

II.

THE DAUGHTER.

THE iron cares that press strong manhood down
A father can, like school-boy tasks, throw by,
When gazing in his daughter's loving eye,
Her soft arms, like a spell, around him thrown :
And passions that, like Upas-leaves, have grown
Most deadly in dark places, which defy
Earth, Heaven, and human will, even these were shown
All powerless to resist the pleading cry
Which pierced a savage but a father's ear,
And shook a soul where pity's pulse seemed dead,
When Pocahontas, heeding not the fear
That daunted boldest warriors, laid her head
Beside the doomed ! Now with our country's fame,
Sweet forest daughter ! we have blent thy name.

III.

THE SISTER.

WILD as a colt, o'er prairies bounding free,
The wakening spirit of the boy doth spring,
Spurning the rein Authority would fling,
And striving with his peers for mastery :
But in the household gathering let him see
His sister's gentle smile, and it will bring
A change o'er all his nature ; patiently,
As caged bird that never used its wing,
He turns him to the tasks that she doth share ;
His better passions kindle by her side ;
Visions of angel beauty haunt the air :
May she not summon such to be his guide ?
Our Saviour listened to a sister's prayer,
When " Lazarus, from the tomb come forth ! " he cried.

IV.

THE WIFE.

THE daughter from her father's bosom goes ;
The sister drops her brother's clasping hand ;
For God himself ordained a holier band
Than kindred blood on human minds bestows.
That stronger, deeper, dearer tie she knows,
The heart-wed wife ; as heaven by rainbow spanned,
Thus bright with hope life's path before her glows ;—
Proves it like mirage on the desert's sand ?
Still in her soul the light divine remains ;
And if her husband's strength be overborne
By sorrow, sickness, or the felon's chains,
Such as by England's noblest son were worn,
Unheeding how her own poor heart is torn,
She, angel-like, his sinking soul sustains.

V.

THE MOTHER.

EARTH held no symbol, had no living sign
To image forth the mother's deathless love ;
And so the tender care the righteous prove
 Beneath the ever-watching Eye Divine
Was given as type to show how pure a shrine
The mother's heart was hallowed from above ;
And how her mortal hopes must intertwine
With hopes immortal ;— and she may not move
From this high station which our Saviour sealed
When in maternal arms he lay revealed.
O, wondrous power and little understood,
Intrusted to the mother's mind alone,
To fashion genius, form the soul for good,
Inspire a Wirt, or train a Washington !

MRS. MARY NOEL McDONALD.

SUCCESSION OF SONNETS.*

I.

JUNE.

1.

COME with thy rose-wreaths, fair and laughing June !
Fling thy rich odors upon every gale ;
Bid the blue waters wake their blithest tune,
And joy and light and melody prevail.
Thou hast a store of treasures, and with thee
We look for all things lovely : butterflies
Flit like winged jewels 'neath thy sunny skies ;
And roam, with tones of music, bird, and bee.
Thou art the loveliest of the sisters three, —
Summer's most beauteous child ! O, still delay,
Fairest of months ! thy parting ; fondly stay,
And pour thy radiant smiles on lake and lea ;
Bear not from earth thy blessed gifts so soon ;
Stay, stay thy flight, O fair and laughing June !

* Published in 1844, at New York. Mrs. McDonald has since married Mr. Henry Meigs.

II.

JUNE.

2.

I WOULD be with thee on the sunny hills,
And by the streams would linger, as they flow
With their perpetual music sweet and low ;
And where, in light, leap out the shining rills,
Like chains of liquid diamonds, I would be :
Methinks 't were sweet to wander far and free,
Tempting each craggy height or sylvan shade, —
A loiterer where the mossy banks, inlaid
With nature's flowery gems, invite repose ;
And, stealing o'er my brow, thy breath of balm
Might lull each care my beating bosom knows,
And bid the tossing waves of thought be calm ;
And I might half forget life's boding ills,
Roaming with thee out on the sunny hills.

III.

JUNE.

3.

ALAS ! it may not be ; I am forbid
By a stern duty, and my feet must press,
Day after day, in toil and weariness,
The city's streets ; while in my heart is hid
Strange, passionate yearnings for a brighter spot.
My childhood's home is stealing on my sight ;
In native loveliness all unforgot,
Fancy reveals it. Well I know the blight
Of time has dimmed its beauty ; yet to me
It ever rises with the summer day,
Decked by thy hand in fair and fresh array ;
And on its verdant slopes I long to be
A happy child, as careless and as gay,
As erst in thy bright reign I laughed the hours away.

IV.

THE FIRST SNOW.

THE mantle white is on the senseless earth,
 Spirit of Winter ; old Æolus rude
 Pipes from his northern home in fiercest mood ;
And o'er the crispéd wreaths with shouts of mirth,
And chiming bells, and laughter ringing free,
 Glides the swift sleigh ; while merry urchins play,
Tossing the frozen balls in heart-felt glee,
 Or forming uncouth shapes of monsters grim,
To melt like youthful hopes, when next the ray
 Of noontide streams on each misshapen limb.
The naked branches wear a spotless vest ;
 While through the window infant faces peep,
 Lured from their downy beds and early sleep,
Wondering to mark the earth in wintry garments drest.

V.

THE FROZEN STREAM.

CHAINED with strong fetters, fair and restless stream,
Thine onward course, thou rover, harshly stayed,
No more by mossy bank or sylvan glade
Goest thou rejoicing ; and the solar beam
That erst threw glittering gems upon thy breast,
No longer owns a power to set thee free.
Fain would the golden rays disturb thy rest,
But, faint and trembling, fail to succor thee.
A mighty arm forbids thy further flow,
And seals with icy band each sparkling wave,
Lays bare the verdant bank thou lov'st to lave
And stills thy babbling tongue ; nor shalt thou know,
Sweet captive, aught of liberty again,
Till Spring with gentle hand unbinds the chilling chain.

VI.

WINTER TWILIGHT.

BRIEF hour for thought ! the dark and wintry day
Is deepening into night, though no pale star
To guide the traveller with its timorous ray
Yet glimmers in the purple depths afar.
Darkness comes stealing on ; — from labor free,
The weary woodman seeks his cottage door,
Where mirthful children on the sanded floor
Leap at his coming, and press round his knee.
From distant casements lights are twinkling now,
Where busy matrons still the needle ply,
Or some pale student strains the anxious eye,
And bends o'er classic page with thoughtful brow.
Stir we the fire, seek fancy's wild domain,
And rear some airy fabric's dizzy height again.

VII.

NIGHT.

DRAW down thy misty curtains, "solemn Night" ;
Dim the fierce fires which still illumine the west ;
While stars look down with sweet though distant light,
Bring to each weary thing its hour of rest :
Sleep to the little song-bird in its nest,
Dew to young blossoms, bending on the tree ;
Call home, on busy wing, the housewife bee,
And seal up infant eyes, in fond arms pressed.
Be thine, to soothe earth's worn and weary child,
With hours of sweet and undisturbed repose ;
Still human hearts, that beat with wants and woes ;
And lull a thousand griefs, — physician mild !
The couch of pain with healthful visions bless,
And cure all ills in deep forgetfulness.

MRS. E. C. KINNEY.

I.

FADING AUTUMN.

TH' autumnal glories all have passed away ;
The forest-leaves no more in hectic red
Give glowing tokens of their brief decay,
But scattered lie, or rustle at the tread,
Like whispered warnings from the mouldering dead ;
The naked trees stretch out their arms all day,
And each bald hill-top lifts its reverend head
As if for some new covering to pray.
Come, WINTER, then, and spread thy robe of white
Above the desolation of this scene ;
And when the sun with gems shall make it bright,
Or, when its snowy folds by midnight's queen
Are silvered o'er with a serener light,
We'll cease to sigh for summer's living green,

II.

A WINTER NIGHT.

How calm, how solemn, how sublime the scene !
The moon in full-orbed glory sails above,
And stars in myriads around her move,
Each looking down with watchful eye serene
On earth, which, in a snowy shroud arrayed,
And still, as if in death's embrace 't were laid,
Saddens the spirit with its corpse-like mien ;
Yet doth it charm the eye, — its gaze still hold ;
Just as the face of one we loved, when cold
And pale and lovely e'en in death 't is seen,
Will fix the mourner's eye, though trembling fears
Fill all his heart, and thickly fall his tears.
O, I could watch, till morn should change the sight,
This cold, this beautiful, this mournful winter night !

III.

CULTIVATION.

WEEDS grow unasked, and even some sweet flowers
Spontaneous give their fragrance to the air,
And bloom on hills, in vales, and everywhere,
As shines the sun, or fall the summer showers,
But wither while our lips pronounce them fair !
Flowers of more worth repay alone the care,
The nurture, and the hopes of watchful hours.
While plants most cultured have most lasting powers.
So, flowers of Genius that will longest live
Spring not in Mind's uncultivated soil,
But are the birth of time, and mental toil,
And all the culture Learning's hand can give :
Fancies, like wild-flowers, in a night may grow ;
But thoughts are plants whose stately growth is slow.

IV.

ENCOURAGEMENT.

WHEN first peeps out from earth the modest vine,
Asking but little space to live and grow,
How easily some step, without design,
May crush the being from a thing so low !
But let the hand that doth delight to show
Support to feebleness the tendril twine
Around some lattice-work, and 't will bestow
Its thanks in fragrance, and with blossoms shine.

And thus, when Genius first puts forth its shoot, —
So timid that it scarce dare ask to live, —
The tender germ, if trodden under foot,
Shrinks back again to its undying root ;
While kindly training bids it upward strive,
And to the future flowers immortal give.

V.

TO A VIOLET FOUND IN DECEMBER.

ILL-FATED Violet ! opening thy blue eye
In Winter's face, who treacherous smiles, to see
So fair a child, of parent such as he !
And didst thou think in his chill lap to lie,
Wrapt in the fallen mantle of the tree,
Secure as if Spring's bosom cherished thee ?
Ah, little flower ! thy doom must be to die
By thine own sire, like Saturn's progeny.
In vain do human gentleness and love
And breathing beauty hope to meet the soul
Through which a holy influence never stole.
Though softening love the lion's heart may move,
It cannot make cold SELF itself forget ;
Nor canst thou Winter change, sweet Violet.

ANNA MARIA LOWELL.

IN ABSENCE.

THESE rugged wintry days I scarce could bear,
Did I not know, that, in the early spring,
When wild March-winds upon their errands sing,
Thou wouldst return, bursting on this still air,
Like those same winds, when, startled from their lair,
They hunt up violets, and free swift brooks
From icy cares, even as thy clear looks
Bid my heart bloom and sing and break all care :
When drops with welcome rain the April day,
My flowers shall find their April in thine eyes,
Save there the rain in dreamy clouds doth stay,
As loath to fall out of those happy skies ;
Yet sure, my love, thou art most like to May,
That comes with steady sun when April dies.

MRS. ELIZABETH JESUP EAMES.

NIGHT-SCENES.

I.

TWILIGHT.

THE holiest hour of earth, methinks, is thine,
O Twilight, meekly fair ! Welcome to all
When, soft and sweet, thy vestal light divine
Over life's toil-worn travellers doth fall.
Then the world pauses from its busy cares ;
Then play-tired children say their evening prayers ;
Then the low cradle-hymn the mother weaves ;
The bird folds up its wing, the flower its leaves.
Yea ! hallowed of all hours since the time
God's presence blest it in the cedar shade,
When the leaves thrilled with joy, though man, afraid,
Shrank from his voice, and fled the Guest divine !
That peerless Paradise is lost, but still,
O Father ! let *this hour* be free from touch of ill.

II.

THE MOON.

IN her serene and solemn loveliness
She looketh down, and meets a human gaze :
Her fair familiar face, through the thin haze
Of dewy night, revealeth not the less
Her pure and perfect beauty. Fairy Moon,
Thy pearly finger silvereth the paper
Whereon I write : small need of lamp, or taper,
In this starred midnight's haunted hour of noon.
And O, the heaven-touched radiance of thy brow
Is like a dream of poetry, enchanting
All the dark depths of my lone heart, beating
With one bright vision of the past, that now
Shines seraph-like, all sanctified and sainted.
But for that spiritual presence, O how oft my heart had
fainted !

III.

THE STAR.

THERE is a star — Eve's fairest and her first —

That with unaltered beauty ever shineth :

What visions of the heart its light once nursed !

Ah ! Hope's fair hand no more her rose-wreath twineth !

Beneath thy silvery rays, O peerless Star,

The beautiful floats dimly and afar.

The fair ideal wrought of the poet's dreaming

Hath left me with an ever-pining heart :

No more my fancy, with bright visions teeming,

Brings to these idle lines the inspiréd art,

O Angel of my youth ! return once more,

And 'neath this star, which is to me a shrine,

The enchanted lamp of poesy restore,

And fill my lone heart with its light divine !

IV.

A CLOUD.

YON delicate cloud of faintest violet,
Floating in peerless beauty 'long the sky,
Heeds not the eternal stars around it set,
But silent as a dream goes gliding by.
O wand'ring cloud ! fair child of dream and vision !
Radiant illusion, shining vapor ! thou
Art like our ideal pictures of Elysium, —
Too bright and brief, as from thy beauteous brow
The changeful glories pass ! As thou to heaven,
Was Hope, the angel, to my future given.
Her wing is folded now ! not long she wore
The dew of morning on her pearly plume,
Cloud-like she passed away ; — O, nevermore
Will Hope return to gild life's grief and gloom !

MRS. ELIZABETH F. SWIFT.*

I.

TO ESTELLE.

COME out upon the dewy hills, sweet friend,
And let us study Nature's changeful face.
Look how the sun's last rays harmonious blend,
Folding the woodlands in a warm embrace ;
Each glowing leaf, stirred by the evening breeze,
Gleams with prismatic hues ; crimson and gold,
Purple and azure seem the waving trees ;
The mists their silvery vapors have unrolled,
And hover o'er the river's troubled breast, —
River, that 'midst such deep and calm repose
Forever murmurs with a sad unrest,
Like human hearts o'erburdened with life's woes.
But see — bright messenger of Heaven, queen of the
summer skies,
Filling the earth with loveliness — the Harvest-Moon arise.

* Mrs. Swift, formerly Miss Lorrain, is a Philadelphian by birth, and first-cousin of Leigh Hunt, the poet. She is the wife of Dr. Joseph T. Swift of Easton, Pa.

II.

MOONLIGHT upon the hills ! there is a spell
Like witchery o'er us : as we gaze around,
A tender light illumines hill and dell,
Falling in golden checkers on the ground.
Now perfume steals from out the forest shades ;
All fragrant things and fair their incense bring ;
And hark ! amid the dim wood's tangled glades,
I hear the gushing waters laugh and sing.
Among the clustering leaves of yonder oak
A ring-dove's nest is hid, — list her soft moan :
Love never to Night's ear in language spoke,
Calling with deeper fondness on its own.
World ! if to thee, sin-stained, such lavish charms are given,
How can a human thought conceive the spirit joys of
heaven !

MRS. EMMA CATHARINE EMBURY.

I.

CONFIDENCE IN HEAVEN.

It is in vain the weary spirit strives
With that which doth consume it ; — there is born
A strength from suffering which can laugh to scorn
The stroke of sorrow, even though it rives
Our very heart-strings ; but the grief that lives
Forever in the heart, and, day by day,
Wastes the soul's high-wrought energies away,
And wears the lofty spirit down, and gives
Its own dark hue to life, O who can bear ?
Yet, as the black and threatening tempests bring
New fragrance to earth's flowers, and tints more fair,
So beneath sorrow's nurture virtues spring.
Youth, health, and hope may fade, but there is left
A soul that trusts in Heaven, though thus of all bereft.

II.

HE who has travelled through some weary day,
And reached at summer eve a green hillside,
Whence he can see, now veiled in twilight gray,
The dreary path through which he lately hied,
While o'er his onward road the setting sun
Sheds its sweet beam on every wayside flower,
Forgets his labors ere the goal be won,
And in his heart enjoys the quiet hour.
Father and mother, be it so with you !
While memory's pleasant twilight shades the past,
May hope illumine the way ye still pursue,
And each new scene seem brighter than the last ;
Thus, wending on toward sunset, may ye find
Life's lengthening shadows ever cast behind.

MRS. SARAH HELEN WHITMAN.

FADED FLOWERS.

REMEMBRANCERS of happiness ! to me

Ye bring sweet thoughts of the year's purple prime, —
Wild, mingling melodies of bird and bee,

That pour on summer winds their silvery chime, —
And of rich incense, burdening all the air,

From flowers that by the sunny garden wall
Bloomed at your side, nursed into beauty there

By dews and silent showers ; but these to all
Ye bring. O, sweeter far than these the spell

Shrined in those fairy urns for me alone !
For me a charm sleeps in each honeyed cell,

Whose power can call back hours of rapture flown ;
To the sad heart sweet memories restore, —

Tones, looks, and words of love that may return no more.

MRS. ANNA MARIA WELLS.

TO A YOUNG MOTHER.

BELINDA ! the young blossom that doth lie
So lightly on thy bosom, — clasp it there ;
For on her brow an empress doth not wear,
Nor in her jewelled zone, a gem more fair,
Or that doth deck her more becomingly.
Forget not, then, that deep within thy flower
The germs lie hid of lovelier, holier things : —
Filial affection, that spontaneous springs ;
High *truth* and maiden *purity* ; the *power*
That comes of *gentleness* ; ay, and more, —
Piety, nourished in the bosom's core.
These, if so cherished, shall thy blossom bear,
And, with the dews of heavenly love impearled,
It shall adorn thee in another world.

MRS. ELIZABETH FRIES ELLET.

I.

SHEPHERD, with meek brow wreathed with blossoms sweet,
Who guard'st thy timid flock with tenderest care ;
Who guid'st in sunny paths their wandering feet,
And the young lambs dost in thy bosom bear ;
Who lead'st thy happy flock to pastures fair,
And by still waters at the noon of day,
Charming with lute divine the silent air,
What time they linger on the verdant way ; —
Good Shepherd ! might one gentle distant strain
Of that immortal melody sink deep
Into my heart, and pierce its careless sleep,
And melt by powerful love its sevenfold chain, —
O, then my soul thy voice should know, and flee
To mingle with thy flock, and ever follow thee.

II.

O WEARY heart, there is a rest for thee !

O truant heart, there is a blessed home,
An isle of gladness on life's wayward sea,
Where storms that vex the waters never come.
There trees perennial yield their balmy shade ;
There flower-wreathed hills in sunlit beauty sleep ;
There meek streams murmur through the verdant glade ;
There heaven bends smiling o'er the placid deep.
Winnowed by wings immortal that fair isle ;
Vocal its air with music from above ;
There meets the exile eye a welcoming smile ;
There ever speaks a summoning voice of love
Unto the heavy-laden and distressed, —
“ Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”

MRS. ALICE BRADLEY NEAL.

I.

MIDNIGHT.

I HAD been tossing through the restless night, —
Sleep banished from my pillow, and my brain
Weary with sense of dull and stifling pain, —
Yearning and praying for the blessed light.
My lips moaned thy dear name, beloved one ;
Yet I had seen thee lying still and cold,
Thy form bound only by the shroud's pure fold,
For life with all its suffering was done.
Then agony of loneliness o'ercame
My widowed heart. Night would fit emblem seem
For the evanishing of that bright dream.
The heavens were dark : my life henceforth the same.
No hope : its pulse within my breast was dead.
No light : the clouds hung heavily o'erhead.

II.

DAYBREAK.

ONCE more I sought the casement. Lo ! a ray,
Faint and uncertain, struggled through the gloom,
And shed a misty twilight on the room, —
Long-watched-for herald of the coming day !
It brought a thrill of gladness to my breast.
With clasped hands, and streaming eyes, I prayed,
Thanking my God for light, though long delayed ;
And gentle calm stole o'er my wild unrest.
“ O soul ! ” said I, “ thy boding murmurs cease.
Though sorrow bind thee as a funeral pall,
Thy Father's hand is guiding thee through all ;
His love will bring a true and perfect peace.
Look upward once again, though drear the night :
Earth may be darkness ; Heaven will give thee light.”

TRANQUILLA.

I.

If all the world had told me thou wert false,
I had defied the world and ta'en thy part ;
But when from *thee* the confirmation comes,
The arrow sinks, deep, deep, within my heart.
It bleeds to think, that, henceforth and forever,
A ghastly doubt must follow at thy side,
That confidence and holy trust can never
Beneath the shadow of our roof abide ;
For unto thee a deep trust I had given,
That, in our darkest moments, cheered me on.
No gifts, no fortune, nothing under heaven
Can e'er replace that faith, it being gone !
Naught but distressing doubts, suspicious fears,
Can fill the measure of our coming years.

II.

I LOVE thee yet ! for nature's ties are stronger
Than I had dreamed ! I strove to break the chain,
Feeling I had no right to love thee longer ;
But, in its greatest agony and pain,
My heart turned to thee, though I scorned and hated
Thy weakness and thy sin. Although, to me,
Thou wert the very thing I most abhorred,
In spite of all my wrath, my agony,
My heart turned to thee, and I could have wept
Hot tears upon thy bosom for my wrongs.
Within thy circling arms I could have slept ;
For slumber had been banished from me long.
I do forgive thee, — yet the world I 'd give
Could I forget, even as I forgive.

SARAH GOULD.

PAULINE.

WHITE-BROWED anemones, daughters of the Sun,
And blue-eyed violets, with the mignonette,
And pale pink roses, with the valley's pet,
The myrtle, iris, lily, — every one
Becomes a sweet interpreter of thee ;
And as I list the voices of thy soul,
So soft and gentle, yet in their control
Strong and subduing, clearly do I see
The latent strength that slumbers in thy spirit,
Where lofty faith, and aspirations high,
And holy loves keep closest company,
Building the heaven predestined souls inherit.
O, the sweet influence of thy soul on mine
Is as an effluence of the most Divine !

THE END.

ERRATUM.

Vol. I. page 128, line 18, *for* whetted *read* wreathed.

Lancaster Town Library

The library is open every afternoon, except Sunday, from 2 until 5, and on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday evenings from 7 to 9.

All books, except new fiction, may be kept three weeks, and a fine of three cents a day will be charged for over detention. New fiction may be kept one week, and the fine will be two cents a day for over detention.

Borrowers may take two books at one time, provided that only one book of fiction is taken.

Books to be renewed must be returned to the library.

The owner of a card will be responsible for all books, fines and penalties recorded against it.

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